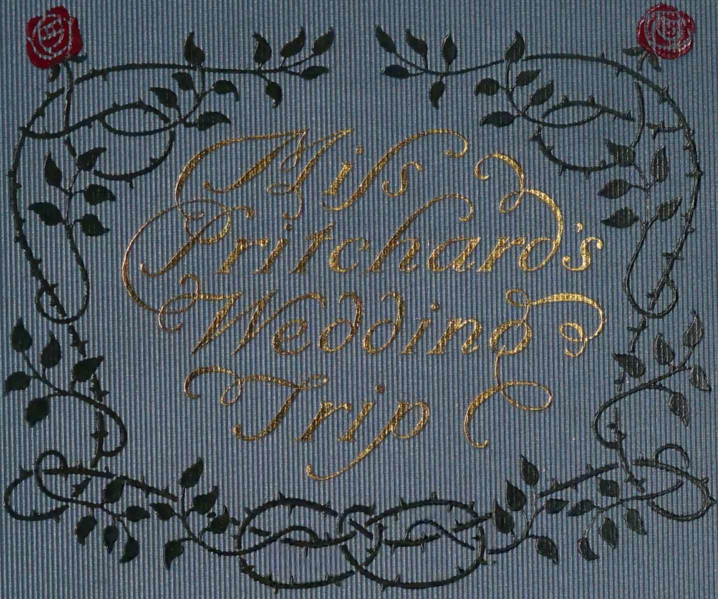

Miss Pritchard's Wedding Trip

Clara Louise Burnham

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MISS PRITCHARD'S WEDDING TRIP

A Novel

BY

CLARA LOUISE BURNHAM

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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To M. D.

THIS BOOK IS INSCRIBED

WITH HAPPY MEMORIES

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MISS PRITCHARD'S WEDDING TRIP

CHAPTER I

THE PRELUDE

If Eunice Pritchard had not been "disappointed" in the sixties, it is improbable that her young cousin Edwina would have gone to Europe in the nineties. There are many ways in which a man may woo a maid without committing himself; but in the nocturnal musing during which for years Eunice continued to rehearse the circumstances of her own heart's surrender, her honesty compelled her to recognize that it had yielded to little wooing. A nonchalant, graceful acceptance of her interest in his hopes and fears had constituted Edwin Wilder's attentions, when she sifted the substance of his constant visits, and only her wish had been father to the thought and growing belief that she was necessary to him.

How many an hour she had sat in the corner of her sofa while he restlessly paced the floor and poured out his perplexities or his schemes, and had felt repaid when the restless glance of his fine eyes concentrated upon her, admiring of some comforting suggestion. Sometimes he threw himself beside her on the lounge, and his voice became caressing as he said: "Little Reliable, there 's nobody like you." Then the waves of his blond head came near, and she would have given years of her life — this stiff, demure New England girl — to have laid her slight hand once on those waves of thick hair above his forehead.

At such a moment her heart would bound. Surely now he would speak. He had leaned on her so long, and her mother expected it, and the neighbors expected it, and she so craved the right to call him hers openly, as for the last year of their friendship she had done to her own heart; but instead of speaking, one day he left Salem, where they lived, for a business trip, squeezing her hand in farewell, but talking to the last only of his business venture.

"He is too proud to marry me before he is successful, because I shall have money," Eunice told herself for the hundredth time.

During the first week of his absence she had received three letters from him; then none for a month. Then the news came that he was engaged to her cousin Alicia. Eunice had asked him to call upon this cousin while he was in New York. The happy Alicia wrote her an effusive letter of thanks for sending so much joy into her life. She said Edwin averred that if he was good for anything, it was Little Reliable who had made him so. There was much jubilant dwelling upon Wilder's personal attractions, and an underscored wonder as to how Eunice could have been with him so much without falling a prey to them. Inclosed in the same envelope was a note from Wilder himself, declaring again the debt he owed to Eunice's influence, and to the platonic affection that had subsisted between them.

In the paralysis of her bitter, chilling grief, the deserted girl ignored her cousin's letter altogether, and to Wilder she wrote as follows: —

DEAR NED, — I wish you and Alicia happiness. If I can ever do anything for you, I am sure you will ask it, and equally sure that I shall grant it.

Sincerely yours,
EUNICE PRITCHARD.

"That sounds exactly like her," remarked Wilder when he read it. "Not much sentiment about Little Reliable."

"I was evidently too gushing to be noticed at all," responded Alicia, and they exchanged a smiling gaze. They could both do without Eunice, who for weeks groped in that outer cold and darkness where all blossoming things die for lack of the sun. She had placed her every possession of heart and mind in the keeping of one being, and, he having tossed them aside, she was left bankrupt. Her course now had to be that of other bankrupts. She saw that she must begin life again, and she did so, devoting herself assiduously to her invalid mother, whose failing state furnished a reason for the great stillness that had fallen upon the daughter, and gave the gossips tantalizing doubts as to whether the facts of Edwin Wilder's going to settle in New York and failure to take Eunice with him had brought that new expression into her face.

"Eunice Pritchard has been a real good daughter," was the general verdict when the young woman was at last an orphan. She was left in possession of so comfortable an independence that the next wonder was as to who would be the man, thrifty enough not to run after a pretty face, as Edwin Wilder had done, but to take Eunice with her spare form, thin cheeks, and snug fortune. A widower with an interestingly assorted family offered himself to her speedily, and as if this circumstance clinched Miss Pritchard's growing distaste for surroundings that held for her such poignant associations, she suddenly packed her belongings and left Salem for Boston, taking her church letter with her.

This looked like permanency. Eunice meant it so. She took a little apartment in Boston and settled down. Had all this happened at the present day, she might have studied medicine or read law; but it was in the sixties, and so she went to sewing society, and to lectures and concerts, and made no friends outside her church, and passed for a placid, well-balanced woman who found no fault with her narrow, colorless path in life.

"Is n't she a typical old maid?" the girls in the church used to say sometimes to one another, and smile at this woman, whose hopes and dreams and possibilities had been as high, and more tender and thrilling perhaps, than any of which they were capable. And Eunice lived on. The wonder is that the monotonous days, weeks, months, years did not shrivel her mentally; but made her more kindly, — more outgoing to the sad and the needy.

A gentle resignation had succeeded to the blighting sorrow of her loss. She long rehearsed, as in the days of her youth, the one gladdest time of her life, and her clear mental vision told her that the man she loved had never shown her one unselfish act. Self-centred even when kindest to her, accepting all she had to give, seeking her because in her eyes more clearly than anywhere else he could see a flattering reflection of himself, she knew that he had never for one moment taken her standpoint or considered her. Hundreds of times she argued this out. Hundreds of times she told herself that no noble woman would love such a character; and having reasoned herself unanswerably into a position where it was logically proven that the man she loved was not Edwin Wilder at all, back would roll the towering wave of feeling, submerging that fabric of the intellect, and carrying away poor Eunice's weighty reasons like wisps of straw borne on a mountain torrent. "Ned, my Ned! I love him!" her heart cried out. So because she loved him she never saw him, though he and his wife sent for her from time to time. She did not attempt to conceal that she avoided them. They might explain it as they liked. For her Ned Wilder still tossed two yellow-brown waves of thick hair above his forehead, though her own was whitening fast. One of his strong teeth overlapped its neighbor at the right side; he still had the gay smile of youth, and not a wrinkle, although she observed the faint lines in her own face without regret. To think about him was pain since it had become a sin, and as the years rolled on she fought the temptation to weakening repining and conquered; but though, as her servant Miranda said and believed, "there was n't a comfortabler person in the land than Miss Eunice," nothing occurred to light a rosy flame again in the lamp of her life until the time when she had passed fifty years of age, and then it was Edwin Wilder's hand which lighted it.

At first she did not recognize what it was that had come to her, nor see the flush of color on the gray horizon that was to grow, and spread, and woo into bud and blossom her long-withered fields. To all weary, hungering hearts the good time will come, but Eunice was to taste it in this world, and the herald of its approach was this letter: —

DEAR LITTLE RELIABLE, — I remember that I wrote you last when our youngest child was born. Seven years afterward poor Alicia died. I have wondered if you knew. I address you now because the doctor says I have n't much time left. The news was nearly my death, on account of Edwina. She will be as lonely a child as can be found when I am gone. I should like to write much in explanation, but strength fails me. She won't be penniless, yet I am leaving her little. She is the only one of our children that lived. Better for her if she had not. Things have gone against me always. I turn to you in trouble as naturally as I did twenty-five years ago. It 's a chance if you will help me, but you promised when you turned me over to Alicia. Poor Alicia! She was a good girl, and she was happy. Strength 's up.

NED.

Miss Pritchard, without a moment's hesitation, wrote the following reply: —

DEAR NED, — I did n't know Alicia had gone. I had no idea you were ill or in trouble. Everything that an ignorant woman can do for your daughter I will do. Whether she be penniless or an heiress, amiable or ill-natured, plain or pretty, it is enough for me that she is your child. Rest assured she shall be my first care so long as I live. When do you wish me to take her? What else can I do for you?

Yours, EUNICE.

What the effect of this message was, the writer of it could only guess, and the guessing flooded her heart with memories and her eyes with tears, for one day Edwin's ring came to her; his mother's ring, the one she remembered so well upon his hand that it was like a familiar beloved feature. With it came a letter from the physician saying that all was over; that Mr. Wilder had asked him to send the ring, and that the little girl would come to her on the following Wednesday. Miss Pritchard could neither eat nor sleep during the days that intervened, and when Wednesday came, by a misunderstanding about the train she missed her little guest at the depot. One of Wilder's friends had brought the child from New York, and this man, being assured by Miranda that Miss Pritchard would at once return to the apartment, left his charge alone in the small parlor, and there Eunice found her sitting patiently, her hat off, and her little feet hanging some inches from the floor.

The two looked at each other eagerly as Miss Pritchard stood in the doorway, faint from haste and excitement. The child smiled questioningly, — a smile that showed one tooth overlapping its neighbor. Above her forehead, where the hair was brushed back, it rose in two rebellious, shining waves. Her eyes were brown and clear. Such overwhelming emotion swept over the woman at the marvelous resemblance that for a minute she could not speak. Her guest broke the silence. "I 'm waiting for my cousin Eunice," she said.

"Yes. Excuse me. I 'm only out of breath. I 'm very glad to see you, my dear." Eunice crossed to the child and took her little hand, looking down at her with yearning. She did not know what to do. It was long since she had kissed any one. She could not summon courage to kiss this living miniature of Edwin Wilder; but she laid her other hand on those two thick waves of hair with such delicate, loving pressure that Edwina's upraised glance hesitated.

"But you are n't — you are n't" — she began.

"Cousin Eunice? Yes. What is it, Edwina?"

The child looked embarrassed. "Nothing, only papa made such a — a funny mistake. He said your hair was auburn. Auburn does n't mean white, does it?"

Eunice's eyes filled again, and she stooped with a sudden gesture so that the two faces were on a level. "Papa forgot that I have been growing old all this time," she said gently, and something in her smile and tone affected the small listener like a tender caress.

Edwina threw her arms around the slender neck and clung there. "I 'm all alone," she said. "Papa told me you were the dearest woman in the world, and you would take care of me, and I am going to love you as much as he did." Then the living miniature of the man who had broken Eunice's heart began the work of reparation in the best way, by kissing her fervently, feeling with a little child's intuition that no love she had lost exceeded this new affection into which she had come, and not questioning why it should be so.

From that day Miss Pritchard commenced to live. At first her prayers were divided. Half of them were expressing thanks to God for his mercies, and the other half beseeching Him to preserve her from idolatry. These last arose from a fear lest she spent too much time watching Edwina in her sleep when she should have been sleeping herself. She often dwelt upon what she had escaped. Ned's child might have resembled her mother and have been named Alicia. Eunice assured herself that had it been so, she should have taken her just the same and done her duty by her.

One day, when Edwina had been with her a fortnight, the two sat sewing together. It was one of Miss Pritchard's theories that the child must be taught early to sew, as she herself had been; but not to allow her to feel the irksomeness of long seams, she cut out doll's clothes, which Edwina made under her eye.

" Cousin Eunice, do you think Edwina is a silly, made-up name? It sounds just as *natural* to me," said the little girl, puckering her lips over the intricacies of a tiny red skirt. " Miranda says it 's silly." Miranda, being elderly and " set," was not yet adjusted to the astonishing new element that had entered into the household.

" It is an unusual name, but of course given you for your father."

" Yes. Papa kept hoping for a boy and kept not having one, so mamma named me Edwina to comfort him." The little girl knotted her thread. " But papa called me Ned, 'most always."

"He did what, my dear?"

"He called me Ned, except when he felt bad. He said that is what you always called him."

Miss Pritchard was silent an instant. "When did he tell you that?"

"A little while before — before he went away," answered the child in the hushed voice she always used in referring to her father's death. "Those last two days he talked about you all the time when he was n't too tired, because I was coming here, you know."

"Yes, dear. Edwina," after a minute, "did your mother call your father Ned?"

"No, she always called him Edwin."

Miss Pritchard quickly put out her hand and rested it on the child's wavy head. Edwina had already come to associate this caress with very high approval. At present, she was considerably mystified to know what she had done to merit it.

"Cousin Eunice," she said timidly, emboldened to ask a question often on the tip of her tongue, "is n't that papa's ring that you wear?"

"Yes, Edwina. It was your grandmother's."

"I know. He told me so. He never would let even mamma wear it. Papa must have loved you the best of all his cousins."

Eunice sewed fast and silently. She had learned already that all Edwina knew of her had been poured into the little mind in those last hours of her father's life.

"I was n't his cousin, dear," she said. "I was your mother's cousin."

"Then it 's queer that you and papa" — Edwina's quick, clear glance fell, and she blushed without knowing exactly why.

"That was n't the way your father loved me. Your mother was very pretty, and so he married her."

"He loved you very hard, though," and the little girl shook her head, "or he would n't have given you his most precious thing." She meant the ring, but Eunice looked at her bent head with a mental "Amen."

"Mamma was sick nearly all the time, but my picture of her is pretty. Do you think I look like her, cousin Eunice?"

"Not at all. You are like your father."

"Then I must have looked more like him when I was a baby." The little girl glanced up with a mischievous twinkle. "I was bald then."

"What did you say?"

"Papa was bald, you see."

"Put — put away your sewing, Edwina!" Miss Pritchard's voice was unsteady.

"Why, what 's the matter?" faltered the child, astonished.

"You must n't — you should n't — looks — they should n't be talked about — do not matter. Put on your hat and run outdoors a while."

It was now that Miss Pritchard rejoiced, and gave thanks for her easy circumstances. The small sum that in time was to be Edwina's she did not draw upon. It should be kept, not for the girl's dowry, — Eunice shuddered at the thought of that, — but for a rainy day. Ever since she had come to Boston to live, she had felt her own ignorance. Every lecture she had attended, every book she read, heightened her wish that girls had been better educated in her young days. Edwina must go to the best schools, regardless of expense; and so she did. The years she took on seemed to be deducted from Miss Pritchard's account, so that Miranda often soliloquized in the kitchen on the subject.

"Hen with one chicken 's nothin' to it, nothin'. I never see a person so changed as Miss Eunice. Got so interested in everything and so chipper, she 'll be goin' to school herself 'fore she gets through." But though Miranda's tone was a grumble, she approved. No one could help approving the change made in one small household in that decade which furnished Edwina's schooling.

"Unless you take some advanced course" — said Miss Pritchard. "You shall go to college, if you like." She said this to the girl when she was at home on her last Easter vacation.

Edwina knew heroic unselfishness prompted the offer, and she looked up from the letter she was opening. "I 'm afraid I 'm not much of a student," she replied.

Miss Pritchard observed her thoughtfully, and with some anxiety. Edwina had for many years been in the society of cultured, refined, wise women. She had learned much from them, and although not the creature of perfect beauty and gifts that Eunice believed her, she was a charming girl: healthy, graceful, and well bred. Her teachers had formed her mind along the most approved lines, and much astonished they would have been had they known in what way Miss Pritchard supplemented their efforts. Her instructions to Edwina were elementary, but fundamental, and the girl smiled to herself over the conflicting reports concerning the great world she was about to enter. Her teachers taught their pupils that if true marriage was added unto them when all the books were conned, the highest end of their lives would be fulfilled. Cousin Eunice instilled into her, line upon line and precept upon precept, that all men were profoundly selfish, and that most women were doomed to love them without reason and to their own misery.

Poor Eunice's ancestors had prayed to a God of vengeance, and she being haunted by the text concerning visiting the sins of the fathers upon the children, her attitude of mind was a strange mixture of grateful acknowledgment to Providence for the priceless gift of her adored child, and a fierce watch upon the Great Power in order to outwit any attempt to punish Edwina for her father's selfishness through the instrumentality of some man who should play with her feelings.

This ruling thought had naturally caused Edwina's bringing-up to be a strict one. Once one of her companions was goaded to a burst of anger by Miss Pritchard's refusal to allow Edwina to take part in some theatricals. "I do think your cousin is too old-maidish and particular for anything! I pity you, Edwina Wilder."

"You need n't!" returned the latter stoutly. "If cousin Eunice is old-maidish, then it's *nice* to be old-maidish!" She was only sixteen then, but she retained this defense of her cousin all her school-days, and her loyalty was such as many a mother longs in vain to command. As she grew older, she constructed a theory concerning the lover-like affection Miss Pritchard held for her. Eunice was certain that she successfully concealed her overweening admiration. She would have thought it very bad for her child to suspect it; and Edwina laughed at her little subterfuges as tenderly as she did at her provincialisms of speech, and being inches taller than her little guardian, petted her and was grateful to her in a manner which caused Eunice to shed tears of sheer joy sometimes in the privacy of her own chamber.

The thorn attached to her rose was the fact of its attractiveness. At the first relaxing of the tension of school life, there was always some serpent in the form of a man trying to approach its fragrance, — succeeding too at times, for Miss Pritchard could not seclude an intelligent girl of nearly twenty from all society. So Eunice set her teeth, and went to concerts with *him* and to theatres with *him*. She sat out *his* calls and endured *his* enjoyment of her treasure's frank, natural words and looks. Sometimes it was one him and sometimes another; but she had no faith in any of them.

Of late a worse thing had befallen. On this special Easter vacation one serpent in particular, Glenn by name, had seemed to Miss Pritchard's Argus-eyes to be of some interest to Edwina. It was the girl's first lapse from desirable indifference, and Eunice had marked him from the first as liable to be dangerous. It occurred to her that his name often obtruded itself into the conversation, and she knew it was never herself who introduced it. To her kindled suspicions it also seemed to her that her darling was unusually abstracted in these vacation days.

Like the woman who all her life had been looking under the bed for a burglar, Miss Pritchard believed her robber had at last arrived. Her mind once set in that direction, not Othello himself was more prone to turn trifles light as air into confirmation. Young Glenn admired Edwina, but he did not call oftener than others. His admiration was the light fancy of a man of fashion for one of many pretty girls. Yet Edwina had begun to care for him. It was this stunning thought that caused Eunice to consider college for Edwina in the light of an easy sacrifice. Let her keep her child's mind preoccupied, safe from the toils of the enemy until she was twenty-five, and all might be well. But, "I 'm afraid I 'm not much of a student," the girl had replied to her offer. Eunice's sharpened ears detected a novel lack of interest and evasiveness in this, and Edwina's absorption in the letter she had just opened gave her guardian an opportunity to regard her with a troubled gaze.

Suddenly the girl began to laugh over her reading. " The Hinckleys are having such a funny time in France ! " she said.

Little did Miss Pritchard care just then about the Hinckleys' experiences.

Edwina's laugh bubbled forth again. " It 's too ridiculous ! Listen to this. You know Belle is the only one of the three who can speak French, but her sister Fanny manages the traveling ; so here is what Belle says : ' You can imagine me being the mouthpiece at the stations when we go to take a train. We never find a man who speaks English, and the trains are so confusing. Fanny is always telling me to " Ask him this," and " Ask him that." Yesterday, mother misunderstood what we wanted to do, and climbed into the wrong carriage. Fanny looked at her in desperate silence for a second, and then turned to me and said : " Ask her to get out ! " ' "

Miss Pritchard smiled, and Edwina's laugh drifted into a wistful sigh as she finished the letter. " They 're having such a good time. What is the use of my French, cousin Eunice, unless we go to Europe ? "

" Well, let 's go," returned the other impulsively. When it is a matter of life or death, the most cowardly woman will take a daring leap.

Edwina's eyes dilated. " Wha — what ! " she gasped.

" Of course we could n't," began Miss Pritchard, frightened.

"We could! we could!" ejaculated the girl, dancing over to her cousin, her cheeks rosy. "I did n't suppose you 'd ever consent, cousin Eunice, but indeed we could."

"My dear! my dear! Wait! We should be perfect babes in the woods."

"Not at all, and I 'd much rather have it than college."

Edwina's face was glowing, and, Miss Pritchard's intrepid moment having passed, she was shrinking in every limb. "Of course, if you *could* be satisfied with California," she said. "Just think of it, Ned, it 's dry land all the way. Really, I was joking, you know. Europe would be against my better judgment." Her tone had the fervor of panic, and the vivacity faded from Edwina's face.

"I 'm sure," she returned, "you could n't have heard all Mr. Glenn said yesterday about his trip two years ago; but," with a quick sigh, "I 'll never go without you except — on my wedding trip."

Once again the open window of deliverance ceased to have terrors compared to those which the girl's words unconsciously revived. Miss Eunice met her wistful eyes with a desperate glance.

"California is beautiful, Edwina," she said solemnly. "Americans don't travel enough in their own country."

"We can do that when we 're old," returned the girl, something in her cousin's manner revealing to her that there was still hope.

"At my age, Ned," —

"That 's just what I say. While you 're young is the time for us to do it. Mr. Glenn says he wishes" —

"It seems foolish to think of such a thing, and yet if you are so anxious" —

"You 'll overcome your fears?" joyously.

"It 's not a question of fear," said Eunice tartly, showing temper as many a gentle creature does at bay. "It 's my better judgment that 's against it."

"Overcome your better judgment then, dear," said Edwina exultingly, "and we 'll sail in June and be in time to see the Queen's drawing-room — from the outside, of course, — yes, from the outside. Don't look as if the stake fires were about to be lighted. She should n't be presented to the Queen, no she should n't!" and the girl's merry eyes looked down into Eunice's as with one arm around her she stroked her hair and charmed away the martyred expression.

"It 's against my better judgment, though, Ned," groaned the little woman.

CHAPTER II

ENGLAND

Miss Pritchard and her better judgment were on excellent terms for a few hours sailing down the harbor away from the Statue of Liberty whose uplifted torch seemed cheering her on toward a foreign shore. No one in that far country would send Edwina roses like those now incumbering their stateroom. Ralph Glenn had managed to see his friends off. "Managed" was the word Eunice silently employed, though most plausible was the errand which the young man declared had happened luckily to compel him to come to New York that week. At any rate, now there was an end of him, — unless some words of his lingered in that pile of steamer letters in which Edwina was smilingly buried. There were days to come, however, and nights — especially nights, for Eunice was a light sleeper — when that better judgment, like an accusing spirit, sat at her elbow and chanted, "I told you so," with the most depressing monotony.

"It is so lucky that one of us is a good sailor," said Edwina brightly on the third day out, as she assisted Miss Pritchard over the mountains and vales of the heaving deck toward the haven of that lady's steamer chair.

"I wish it were I, then," retorted Eunice with feeble asperity.

"So do I, dear," sympathetically.

"Fiddlesticks! that 's because you don't know!" Miss Pritchard groaned as she settled flaccidly into her outspread rug and back against a down pillow, while Edwina carefully folded the rug over her. The deck steward flew to their assistance. His eyes were always quick to see when Edwina could be served. He picked up Miss Pritchard's feet rather suddenly to swathe them, and she scowled at him. Edwina tried to scowl, too, as well as she could with the blue waves leaping and the porpoises springing in twos and threes in a graceful arch from the sunny flood.

"Steward, this is a very noisy boat," she said accusingly. "My poor cousin scarcely slept at all last night. The people talk outside her window till all hours."

"Jus' so, miss. So they do. The weather 's so fine, you see, miss."

Edwina had to assent in a very inmost recess of her being, where cousin Eunice should n't detect a glimmer of it through the windows of her soul. She should like to sit up till all hours herself in the short, starry night.

"And then they begin washing the decks at such an unearthly hour," she continued severely. "What in the world is that thing they drop right over cousin Eunice's — I mean our — heads before five o'clock in the morning?"

"Jus' so, miss. That would be the 'oly stone, miss."

The girl's curving lips twitched. "Holy stone? Unholy stone, if ever there was one! It's an imposition!" more severely than ever after one glance at Miss Pritchard's countenance. "They should let people sleep *some* part of the night."

"Jus' so, miss. If I was capting, they should. 'E could give horders, don't you see, w'erehas I 'm only one of the common 'erd, as you might say, miss."

The man's eyes were twinkling. Perhaps, as in his long experience he had seldom seen a wind-kissed face more evidently blooming with health and spirits than Edwina's, he understood her position.

Those to whom Neptune's poetry of motion is a hostile exercise can appreciate that there were moments during that voyage when Miss Pritchard did not care if she never again laid eyes upon Edwina, and that during the entire trip she was totally indifferent, when the girl was absent from her sight, as to whom she was with or what she was doing. At last, after what seemed to her a long, indefinite nightmare, in which unreasonably gay couples were always hastening past her chair in procession, at a gait employed on land only when one is late for a train, it seemed to her, she came to herself. Her head felt steady, her loathing of life in general, and meal-hours in particular, departed, and she looked upon Edwina with new — or rather, the old — eyes.

"I guess I've been pretty cross, Ned," she remarked, the evening before they landed.

"It is very seldom any one is so wretched all the way over," responded the girl.

"To go to bed in a watery waste night after night, to get up morning after morning still swimming, and lurching, and pitching, — it 's a good thing I did n't know what was before me."

"You 'll forget it in a week; and those must be the lights of Dover! Oh, cousin Eunice! It 's England! Think of it! We 're really seeing England!"

"H'm," dryly. "I hope you 'll like it, for I can assure you you 've cast the die, Edwina. I shall never take this trip again."

"Really? Well, it shan't be pneumonia that prevents you. I 'm going to get your fur collar. It is too cool for you out here."

She disappeared, leaving her cousin standing alone by the rail. "See there, is n't that like a diamond necklace?" asked Eunice after a time, as some one, she supposed Edwina, approached and stood beside her in the dusk.

A man's voice — and a strikingly pleasant one — replied: "Yes, I fancy that is Folkestone; but it is enough for you that it is land, I imagine. I 'm glad to see you are feeling well again, Miss Pritchard."

Eunice stared up into the speaker's face. Like herself, he had discarded the habiliments of the sea, but had he still been in the rough outing clothes he had worn, she would have failed to recognize him. The bad dream of the past ten days had been peopled with more or less loathsome human beings, the more objectionable being those who had attempted to talk to her. She judged that this stranger, from his familiarity with her name, must belong to that class.

"Thank you," she answered, recovering herself. "When people at my age are foolish enough to go to sea, they must take the consequences, and so must their friends. I came on this trip against my better judgment — altogether against it."

"Yes, you told me so that day I helped you to your chair when you could n't find Miss Wilder."

"H'm. Did I?"

Miss Pritchard dimly remembered the circumstance; but her assistant might have been a tree walking on that occasion, for all the individuality he had assumed to her. She gave another upward side-glance at his smooth face. At the same moment Edwina approached, and nodded to the young man as she placed the collar about her cousin's shoulders.

"You see, cousin Eunice is quite herself again, Mr. Champion; but I 'm to take out our naturalization papers (if that 's the name of them) as soon after we land as is practicable. She 's never coming back."

The girl's tone was such as she might use to any one of those acquaintances and friends whose roses had been consigned to the deep more than a week ago. Miss Pritchard began to consider that there were ten days of her child's life that had been a sealed book to her, — Edwina's own particular ship's log, into which she should like to pry. She looked involuntarily through the darkness for more male beings to appear. Nonsense! This tall personage might have a wife and baby on board.

No Mrs. Champion, however, appeared at the evening lunch, where Miss Pritchard partook, with the appetite of the hollow, of sandwiches and ginger ale which the young man provided. She gave herself up to the feast in genial mood, wondering if it might be the recent starvation of her senses that made her host's manner impress her so agreeably and his laugh seem, with one exception, the most musical and infectious to which she had ever listened.

He was very helpful to them in the events of the following morning. He stood in line in the crush of the saloon, and secured their tickets for the train with his own. He helped them through the customs, and chaffed Miss Pritchard about the spirits and tobacco which at the officer's demand she denied having; and when they all set foot upon English soil, Eunice forgot all apprehension of the Serpent's possible baneful power, in eager reliance upon his wisdom to get them started in this strange land, where Edwina was just ignorant enough to have no fears.

The sight of the train, so strangely small to American eyes, roused her amazement. The little pea-green engine shrieked.

"Looks like a baby, and squeals like one!" she ejaculated scornfully.

"Look out, Miss Pritchard, — the country of your adoption, you know," warned Champion. He handed his companions into a luxurious carriage, where Eunice sank back upon the fine soft cushions and gazed about her.

"First class," explained Edwina, whom knowing ones on the ship and her Baedeker had made wise. "Make the most of it, cousin Eunice. You 'll never ride first class again. We 're neither fools nor princes, nor," smiling toward Champion, — "nor even Americans any more."

Arrived in London, their ways parted, and this was the chief fact why Miss Pritchard's heart warmed unusually to Howard Champion. He had been helpful and kind; so, though his physical man was of a sort to be objectionable to her, her little hand gave his a timid squeeze when he had put them in their cab and said a rather elaborate good-by. He himself was bound for the house of friends. He was an architect, and was going to the cathedral towns almost at once, and for this Eunice, when he turned and replaced his hat, looked after his retiring form approvingly, inasmuch as she should never see its well-set-up lines again.

"And now we 're alone in London," said Edwina slowly, large-eyed and solemn, as their horse started.

"Don't! You give me a turn!" exclaimed

Eunice, her pensive gaze coming back in the deafening turmoil.

The girl threw an arm around her and gave her a squeeze. "It 's the greatest fun in the world!" she laughed. "There are two things only that make our happiness precarious: the letter of credit and the address book. If I should lose either of those, it would give *me* a turn. Baedeker, of course; but if I lost him, I could buy him again. Oh, I 'm the happiest girl in Europe!"

Miss Pritchard regarded her kindling face with dark doubts that she had been gulled. If ever a maid appeared fancy-free, this girl appeared so. If she were so indeed, then what necessity for enduring the writhing misery of that ocean liner, — for the unspeakable din at this moment afflicting Eunice's Bostonian ears? No, it would be too much to acknowledge this upheaval to be for naught. "I nipped it in the bud, that 's all," thought Miss Pritchard stoutly. "I acted promptly. I was in time. The diversion has already been effectual."

The following days were given to seeing London in the radiant June weather, every window a garden of blossoming flowers, and the blue vault of heaven smiling down upon all. Miss Pritchard caught a bit of her child's enthusiasm even when it took the form of riding on top of a 'bus from Hyde Park corner up Piccadilly at six o'clock P. M. She held tight to the rail and looked down fearfully on the compact mass of horses and vehicles through which the clever drivers managed to find a way, and tried to realize that dying with Edwina would have its compensations.

The Queen's drawing-room, with Her Majesty at Balmoral and the Princess receiving, was entered into by Edwina with most eager zest. "It is good fun to be nobody at all at this sort of thing, unless you can be somebody in particular, because then you can do exactly as you like," she said, getting into a cab with passive Miss Pritchard and driving slowly past the long line of carriages waiting with their fair freight between St. James Park and the palace, the stiff and pompous coachmen all wearing enormous bouquets on their breasts.

"How many, many sweet girls!" exclaimed Edwina, while trying to make her pertinacious gaze seem to fall accidentally on the fresh English faces, from which the white veils swept back. "It is like seeing hundreds of brides in low-necked gowns, and never a bridegroom in sight."

Miss Pritchard looked admiringly at the wondrous display of rare flowers carried in the fair procession. The champing horses and fine carriages under the arching trees, the strains of the band in the golden sunshine, the brilliant uniforms of the military, gave her republican soul that odd half-resentful thrill which assails it at the novel approach of royalty.

"Oh, the Beef-Eaters! the Beef-Eaters!" ejaculated Edwina. "We must get out." And get out they did, hurriedly paying the cabman and pressing forward for a nearer view of the erect, stately old men, gray-bearded, who marched to the Palace from the Tower in the red and gold of their historic uniforms, the crowds held back for their passage.

Now the coaches of the nobility began to roll by against the background of the verdant park. "They have n't changed a bit since Cinderella's day," said Edwina delightedly. "Same prancing horses, and glitter, and golden splendor, same powdered wigs and cocked hats. I know if twelve should strike they would all change back into rats and mice — and oh! cousin Eunice! there 's Cinderella — quick!"

From the window of a golden coach leaned a youthful high-bred face, a coronet jeweled at every point resting on the waves of brown hair. "Do you wish you were in one of those carriages?" asked Miss Pritchard.

"Of course I do. I would n't be so unnatural as not to wish to be 'presented'; but the next best thing is to be one of the *hoi polloi* and stare my eyes out at the swells and their bushels of orchids." And Edwina seemed to find the next best thing so satisfactory that Eunice put aside the transient regret that her circle of acquaintance did not include a duchess.

At last came the long-awaited royal carriages. The first, containing the Duke and Duchess of York, was welcomed by the band by one stave of familiar music.

"Good! They 're going to play 'America,'" said Miss Pritchard. "Why don't they go on with it?"

"Here come the Prince and Princess, — there, now they play more, you see," as the crowd cheered and the band again began with energy.

"'My country, 't is of thee,'" hummed Eunice.

"What 's this? what 's this? It 's high time you were learning 'God save our noble Queen!' The idea of these hankerings after a country that you have renounced! Never mind rocks and rills now!"

They stood in the crowd until it began to disperse. Edwina gave a sigh. "There! It 's over! Let 's go over to Hyde Park, since there 's nothing more to be seen here and we 're not asked in."

"The trees, Edwina. The trees in England are a dream," said Miss Pritchard as they started along Constitution Road, she taking her child's arm in a serenely happy frame of mind. Again the idea came to her, as it had several times done, that she was having the belated joy of the wedding trip she had once dreamed of. One by one her fears were falling away from her, little by little the clouds over her pleasure had rolled away. She had her child all to herself in a strange land, and was giving her an experience and opportunity in which Edwina reveled. Moreover, England in June is of itself enough to uplift the most hardened pessimist, and its beauties sank into Eunice's nature-loving soul. Whether they sat, at the rate of tuppence a seat, in Rotten Row, and commented on the carriage folk, riders, and pedestrians, or whether they listened to the birds in Kew Gardens and Hampton Court, the vast spreading trees and the flowers were a constant joy to them both.

No American ever outdid Eunice in awe and admiration of Windsor Castle, set with such imposing dominance on its green hill. She climbed the heights of its tower and rested on its terraces. She lingered over Henry the Eighth's grave in St. George's Chapel until Edwina assured her that her behavior was indecorous, and would occasion remark; and by the time they sat down to lunch at The White Hart, over the way from the Castle, they were both weary.

Edwina had a small plot ripening in her mind, but she was too wise a maiden to reveal it until she had fed and revived Miss Pritchard to the point of enterprise. "I wonder what our little jockey is doing," she remarked as she poured her cousin's tea.

"Our little what?"

"Of course you remember little Johnnie on the boat. I pointed him out to you. That cunning little boy who was a jockey?"

"Edwina," severely, "never ask me if I remember anything on that boat!"

"That 's true. You were dead to the world. Well, he was a bright little chap. He used to take me down into the hold to see his horses. They would lean their heads out and whinny when he came near."

"H'm." Miss Pritchard was somewhat interested in any light thrown on those last days, and a child's company, even a jockey's, must be harmless.

"His trainer told me Johnnie had never lost a race, and he had ridden several."

"For pity's sake, Ned! What were you thinking of to be talking with a *trainer!*"

"He was a very nice man, and wore almost as many rings as his wife did; but Johnnie was the simplest, most honest little fellow. I asked him once what he thought of when his horse was winning and nearly at the goal. He reflected for a while, and then said: 'I don't have time to think nothin'.' I should like to see him ride."

Miss Pritchard was busy with her fried sole, and made no remark.

"I don't believe he rides at Ascot," hazarded Edwina.

"No?"

"The races are going on there to-day."

"Yes? Is n't this sole delicious?"

When they had finished lunch, and Eunice was leaning back in her chair waiting for the bill to be paid, the placidity of her countenance encouraged her companion to come to the point.

"It would be pretty good fun to go out to Ascot."

"When?"

"Now."

"No, no! Not horse-racing, Ned!"

"You need only look at the crowd and the clothes."

"But we two alone! Such an ungodly place!"

"We must do something, the weather is so heavenly, and we go through Great Windsor Park. It 's a great pity not to see that now we 're so near."

Edwina observed the expression which the word "park" brought into her cousin's face. "They tell me it is one of the finest about London. It will be our only chance."

At this Miss Pritchard forgot all about Ascot and that most senseless of diversions, horse-racing, and mounting blithely to the top of an omnibus with her child and a few other belated ones, they set forth through the regal elm avenues of the vast field, her heart swelling with appreciation of the leafy vistas where the dappled deer trod lightly on the velvet green in their lovely isolation. So they might have moved on for hours and Eunice would not have observed the passage of time, but when they emerged into a village street and paused before a tavern, she roused herself from her dreams.

"Do we get down here?" she asked vaguely.

"No, this is only to give the horses the usual buckets of malted milk," replied Edwina, who always sat as close behind the driver as possible, and took great interest in the opaque beverage which regales English 'bus horses.

"Then where are we going?"

"To Ascot," said Edwina sweetly.

"My dear, I told you it was against my better judgment" —

"But we can't get anything to drive back in from here."

"Oh, in that case" — and on they went through the winding country lanes, which quickly diverted Miss Pritchard, and which she regretted to exchange for a scene which caused her to say to herself with emphasis that "only man is vile."

They dismounted from their plebeian vehicle when it had worked its way among every species of wheeled conveyance, and Edwina's eyes danced as with her bewildered cousin clinging to her she moved over the yielding turf toward an amazing din of conflicting orchestrions in the side-shows facing the track; but before they had reached their clamor, a sweet fluty note, strange and charming, made the couple turn here and there to place the mellow whistle; and at the same moment they looked and pointed delightedly at the brown atom wheeling toward the earth.

"It can't be a very bad place where a skylark comes," said Eunice hopefully.

"I don't know. Larks are considered questionable."

"To think I 've really seen a skylark!"

"We 'll see everything!" declared Edwina exultantly.

"And hear everything!" groaned Eunice, for their rapid walk brought them toward the bellowing lungs of brass which were defying each other with different tunes, neither of which had any hope of victory.

Delicate costumes trailed across the grass; horses and jockeys were gathering at one end of the field for the principal race of the day. The grand stand was black with spectators. Yet the side-shows did not despair of patronage. Eunice's amazed eyes beheld one tent over which was a grotesque painting labeled "The Elephant-Man from Indiana, America," and for fear that this advertisement was not sufficiently noticeable, a man stood before the tent-curtain and rang a large dinner-bell with might and main.

"Come away! come away!" begged Eunice.

Edwina obediently moved along, her mind intent on securing a place so close to the track that Miss Pritchard's short stature should not deprive her of the sight. Eunice still clung to her, divided between admiration of the wide green fields and airy summer costumes, and shrinking from the pandemonium of the merry-go-rounds and the flight of excited horses as they skimmed by in the race.

At the climax of excitement, her doubts as to whether she were happy or miserable were settled by the advance of a shabby man with a bag who pressed upon her a small tract headed in capitals, *The Eternity Stakes*, and proving under three divisions, *The Start*, *The Race*, and *The Finish*, that all this hilarious, betting crowd and those who consorted with them were well started on that track which leads with increasing swiftness downward. Its accusing head-lines seemed set to the screech of the orchestrions.

"Edwina, we *must* go!" ejaculated Miss Pritchard in a sort of frenzy, just as every one about her seemed caught in a storm of excitement.

"Was n't that *great?*" exclaimed the rosy girl, joining in the applause that drowned the lessening hoof-beats, the applause again being drowned in mad cheers of victory. "And Johnnie was n't there at all! They were all much bigger than Johnnie. Oh, I 'm afraid that 's the last, cousin Eunice, by the way the people are moving. Were n't we lucky? We 're always lucky." Her eyes were sparkling, and she squeezed her cousin's hand against her side triumphantly.

"We should n't have come. It 's wicked. Let 's hurry away," returned Eunice with agitation, pulling toward the distant road.

"Did n't you like it? Did n't that rush make your cheeks tingle?" Edwina moved with her in the stream of people, laughing at the tremors she could not understand. "What is wicked about seeing those beautiful horses let out their strength? They enjoyed it as much as the skylark reveled in his song."

Half a sob caught in Miss Pritchard's throat. "That little lark did n't know what company he was in, I 'm sure of that; but neither did we; and now we 'll just find that 'bus and get back to London as soon as we can. Don't you think if you should fee the driver, he 'd go fast, Edwina? I 'm sure we shall be very late at best."

The careless crowd pressing upon and by them brought Edwina to a realization of the situation. She ceased smiling, and began to look industriously about her in search of a conveyance as she hastened her steps. Rough men were swarming upon the public conveyances like flies, and shouting as they drove away. It was a bewildering situation. Several times the girl tried to mount into a vehicle, only to be told in no gentle tone that it was engaged. She did not know where to turn, and as the distance to Windsor and thence to London loomed before her mental vision, she refrained from consulting her watch lest her dismal apprehensions should be verified.

The nonchalant and cool manner which she managed to retain while she scrutinized the situation exasperated rather than soothed her companion. "It was against my better judgment that we came to Europe at all," she mourned as a burly man knocked against her little shoulder in passing. "If we had n't come I should n't have been sick on the ship, and you would n't have gone about with swearing horse-racers, and you 'd never have thought of coming here to the land's end, where folks are most likely betting and going to kill themselves, and — don't tread on my toes, you big loafer! — and we 've got to stay here all night, and perhaps — Oh!" the exclamation was in a tone of sudden frenzy, and to Edwina's astonishment Miss

Pritchard dropped her arm and slipped through the crowd.

A pair of horses impeding her a moment, the girl, when she had managed to cross the street, beheld her cousin clasping the hand of a tall man in both her own and pouring forth upon him a flood of eloquence. Pleasure was struggling with mystification in his face, and triumphed when he saw Edwina, who instinctively stiffened.

"Dear me, Mr. Champion, how my cousin's onslaught must have surprised you," she said, receiving his eager greeting with a passively yielded hand. "Is she casting two damsels on your mercy, as if you were a knight of old? The conveyances here seem to have no system, but I am sure we shall soon find one."

The young man had no mustache into which to smile his amusement, so he bowed respectful assent and would have spoken except that Eunice struck in nervously.

"You know we shan't, Edwina! We 've tried and tried, and it 's a perfect *Providence* that I saw Mr. Champion just as I was ready to cry. How are you going back?" turning to him again, as if the very sight of his cool, strong face promised relief.

"I am a guest on that drag over there," indicating with a motion of his head a gay party who with their four glistening horses seemed ready to start.

"And they are waiting for you," said Edwina, her acute annoyance struggling into her quiet tone. "Pray don't stay a moment. The crowd makes cousin Eunice nervous, but she may trust me; there are a dozen ways that we can get back. Go at once, please!"

The light in her eyes reduced Miss Pritchard to speechless supplication.

"Oh, that's all right," said Champion carelessly. "It is a confusing place. Just stand here a minute, will you?"

He strode away, and Edwina saw him make a gesture toward his party and then disappear. With nervous energy she again looked about her, and asking her cousin to wait where she was, she ran up to many species of vehicles, some in such a ramshackle condition that ordinarily she would not consider their possibility, and demanded, even pleaded, for places for two. A little matter of money should not prevent her from meeting Champion on his return with polite thanks and explanation that, places having offered, she had already secured them.

No one would have her, although refusals were sometimes softened by reference to her bonny face, which changed it to a crimson. Oftener a blunt "Now!" discouraged her efforts, and still the luckier crowd swarmed into the places awaiting them, and at last a desperate call from Miss Pritchard brought her reluctant feet back to where she had left her.

Champion was getting out of a low, black, open wagon, and while he handed eager Miss Pritchard to her place, he addressed her cousin. "Only two other passengers, and they look inoffensive. Sorry I could n't get you something loftier, for I am afraid you will catch the dust."

"I'm sure we thank you very much," said Edwina as she seated herself.

"Oh, indeed we do!" added Eunice with fervor. "You know I told you it was against my better" —

The wagon rattled off, and she waved her hand toward the lifted hat.

"What an elegant turnout that was of his!" said Miss Pritchard. "What," rolling up her eyes, "what a time we have had!"

"You make too much of it," said the girl curtly. "If Mr. Glenn were here, he would say you have no sporting blood."

"Mr. Glenn — her first thought," reflected Eunice. "I should hope not," she said devoutly. "We went into it innocently, Edwina. People get drawn along through beautiful places where there are deer and larks, and never think of the pit they may be approaching. Look at this." She put the lurid tract into her child's hand.

Edwina examined it listlessly, and gave a short, scornful laugh. "'The road to ruin!' What do I care for the lake of brimstone after this mortifying experience! Yes," for her cousin started and stared, "how could you let Mr. Champion know what a position we were in, — jostling in that disgusting beery crowd, and being brushed off every conveyance we tried for as if we were flies!"

Her astonished companion stammered: "I — I — why, Edwina" —

"I'd rather have stayed there all *night* — yes, in the tent with the elephant-man, than have met him!"

"Edwina," looking appealingly into the flashing eyes, "you said only the other day you *liked* to be nobody in particular — one of the crowd — so you could do as you wished."

"Where I'm not known. You made us known. You made all that drag party wait while Mr. Champion, a stranger, rushed about in the dust for two senseless women who had n't had forethought to make the simplest arrangements for themselves, and who did n't hesitate to take advantage of their slight acquaintance with him."

"Dear me, Edwina!" was all Eunice could say, and she looked appalled. Never in the girl's life had she spoken to her in such a manner.

So they sat for a time in silence, each confronting her own disquiet, while the rattle of the comfortless wagon filled their ears as it had covered their speech from the curiously gazing man and woman who were their companions.

Slowly the girl's pulses grew calmer, and annoyance at her own excitement surmounted her mortification. "I am exaggerating absurdly," she said to herself, although her pride continued to assert loudly that to-morrow and for many to-morrows the picture of the gay company on the drag waiting while Miss Pritchard clung to and detained one of their number would make her warm. Her eyes fell upon her cousin's averted face, and a wave of contrition swept through her. It had been her own determination that had lured the little woman to Ascot, and her own inexperience and thoughtlessness which had placed them in an embarrassing position, and had not Miss Pritchard behaved so impulsively, what proof had she that they would now be on the much-desired road to Windsor?

There was nothing in the peculiar relation between Edwina and her cousin to have caused the former ever to dwell upon the debt of gratitude she owed her, from a material standpoint. From that first day when Eunice caressed her wavy head with such timid, fervent affection, and the lonely child had gone gladly in to fill the place that was waiting for her, there had been no calculation or conscious sense of duty in either toward the other.

Edwina knew she was the sun of Eunice's world, and knew that in the beginning this had been because Eunice had loved her father only, of all men; and any sense of her own dependence on her cousin had always been swallowed up in the knowledge, affectionately and chivalrously entertained, of Miss Pritchard's dependence upon her. A vague sense of having been false to a trust assailed her now as she regarded the little figure with the averted face; and a smile and a tear both rose at the realization of this dismal return from the races in distinction from the festive pictures usually connected with Ascot. Clouds of dust were powdering their hats and gowns, and close in Eunice's thin little hand was grasped the tract with its promises of sojourn in a locality where such reckless indulgence as the present excursion would be atoned for eternally.

The smile triumphed. Edwina put her arm around the little dusty shoulders. "Don't you care," she said cheerfully.

"I won't if you don't," returned Miss Pritchard, turning and seeking the renewed sunshine of her child's eyes eagerly. "I had n't an idea, Edwina, that you disliked Mr. Champion so."

This, then, was the fruit of Eunice's puzzled reflections.

"We 'll have a fine breathing spell going through the park," said the girl, "and get away from the dust. Let 's throw away this little bit of good cheer," unloosening her cousin's hand from the tract. "It might frighten the deer."

Miss Pritchard yielded the paper. "I don't really think we 've had a good enough time to be punished for," she said, so naïvely that the girl smiled again. She had had a good time and a punishment in rapid succession; and if she had deserved the latter, could, according to her cousin's code, start square again with the world.

The drive through the park in the late afternoon was a refreshment, and still further soothed the two excursionists. Eunice's eyes looked happily out through her dusty veil on the acres of velvet turf, where the starlings ran hither and yon, and fawns disported themselves beneath the symmetrical giant trees. This was no place to read the little red tract. Fragrance, song, innocence, contentment, were in the air.

"Beautiful England, Edwina!" she breathed, leaning back in the hollow of the girl's arm.

"Beautiful England, cousin Eunice."

CHAPTER III

WALES

Commemoration Week at Oxford was drawing near, and Edwina knew that the only hope of a glimpse of those classic shades was in hastening away now from London. She was an energetic girl, with her wits about her usually, and her dilemma at Ascot had determined her never to make another fiasco in her position of courier for lack of foresight.

"One more visit to the Abbey?" pleaded Miss Pritchard.

"When we're living here there will be time enough for that."

"And going away from the Bow Bells!" went on Eunice sentimentally.

"It's now or never at Oxford," returned Edwina firmly; and so they took the train.

"I don't like to be locked in," said Miss Pritchard, when the guard had slammed the door.

"Why? Do you want to get out?" for the train was gaining speed.

"It's the idea," explained Eunice; but she soon forgot the natural American resentment of protection, in pleasure at the charming landscape.

Mr. Julian Ralph protested against the casting aside of a scrap of paper in an English street by another American, saying, "Man, what are you doing? You 'll spoil England!" And this order and culture and verdant charm of the whole country began to impress itself more and more on the travelers. No waste or neglected spot met their admiring eyes; but Edwina soon began to read her Baedeker, and study her address book. She had already done what she could by writing, but not having succeeded in receiving a definite promise of an abiding-place, it was a relief on reaching Oxford to find a house where they could be lodged for the short time that intervened before that gala week for which every nook and corner in the town had been engaged long before.

The knowledge that their hours were few lent an extra zest to the pleasure of roaming through the colleges with their flowery quadrangles, cool cloisters, and ivy-clad walls. The Memorial Hall and kitchen at Christ Church College — the portraits in the one and the enormous fireplace in the other, were, Miss Pritchard said, worth untold pages of English history to her, and brought Cardinal Wolsey's day and his interests very close. Edwina could hardly tear her from a fascinated regard of three huge roasts turning at one time on the spit before the glowing expanse of fire in the kitchen, where a great turtle winked reflectively, biding its time.

The girl had an ambition to go on the Thames in a punt, so she led her cousin to the riverside, only to find — to Miss Pritchard's secret satisfaction — that all the boats were engaged. They looked curiously at the house-boats moored along the bare shore, which rather disappointed Edwina by its lack of picturesqueness. Another and narrower stream tempted them out of the hot sunshine to explore its shaded banks. It was the Cherwell River, and here were the poetry and charm that the girl had sought. The smooth grass grew down to the water's edge. Old trees hung out over the stream, extending leafy boughs in dense arches. The river wound murmurously between its velvet banks, and Miss Pritchard and Edwina sat down in the dreamy quiet, and watched the luxurious students whose punts and canoes glided into sight in endless lazy procession around the bend of the stream. Prostrate among downy cushions, a young man in white flannels, feet in the air and a pipe in his mouth, was buried in the pages of a book, while at the stern of his boat another youth silently and pensively propelled the floating couch. This picture was repeated *ad infinitum.*

"And to think," said Edwina, "that we shall never know if those patient punters ever get their innings and lie down in those cushions while the sybarites take their turn at toiling. Cousin Eunice," after a moment of listening to the bird-songs trilling on the air, "I 've decided I 'd rather be an Oxford student than anything."

Miss Pritchard smiled. "If you could have all your desires granted, I should have a queer traveling companion. Let me see. You 've wanted to be a porpoise, and a maid of honor, an English robin, a horse jockey " —

" But you can see for yourself that Oxford students have the pleasantest time in the world; and is n't it a shame we have to be driven out of town? There do seem to be such a lot of places where we 're not invited. Oh, do look at those green reflections in the water — and we have to go away! Come, cousin Eunice, I 'm panic-stricken for fear we 're missing something."

She rose and gave a hand to her companion, and together they strolled along the Broad Walk with its avenue of magnificent trees surrounding the living green of Christ Church meadow.

" Be a porpoise or a student, or both, if you like, Edwina," said her cousin impressively, " but I shall be a poet if we stay in England much longer."

" I know it. I don't revere Tennyson nearly so much as I did, for how could he help it ? "

The following morning found the pair under the climbing roses and vines of Magdalen College. They stood in the cloister and listened, thrilled, to singing which came from behind the closed doors of the chapel. Then they passed out upon the little bridge, overgrown with moss and ivy, that spans the narrow river as it steals quietly beneath the gray old walls. They watched the fish disporting themselves in the clear water, lovingly regarded the lofty trees, beginning at the very ground to bear their lavishly generous boughs. Then, tempted into Addison's walk, they took the long ramble through its shade and were happy.

"Perhaps it is a good thing there is a serpent in Eden," said Miss Pritchard with a sigh.

"You mean the bells during the night?" for Eunice, the sensitive and nervous, had already mentioned her woes. "They were pretty bad. They even disturbed me."

"So, beautiful as it is, I think one more night of hearing a chorus of bells bang out 'Three Blind Mice,' not quite together, for hours at a stretch, will satisfy me."

"They did do that," assented Edwina with a laugh. "I felt like imploring them just to go on to the next stave — 'See how they run'!"

"They'll 'see how they run' to-morrow if they watch us," returned Eunice.

Edwina had noticed an advertisement that "Much Ado About Nothing" was to be given that night in one of the college gardens, so she and Eunice, after their long, happy day, took their way thither when the sun was low in the west. As they entered the grounds the birds were pouring forth vespers in the massive trees. The turf, fine and smooth as pile of velvet, yielded beneath their feet. Climbing roses, large and red, swung in the faint, cool breeze. The stage was built about a clump of old elms and blossoming shrubs, and completely carpeted with turf. An invisible orchestra began to play the music of the garden scene from "Faust." Eunice and Edwina sank into their places in silence. Just as the sunset turned gorgeously crimson, the play commenced. There might have been faults to be found with that representation, but our couple saw none. To them, as the actors in their quaint costumes came and went, pushing aside the branches of the trees as they made their entrances and exits, the illusion was perfect. It was the time of Shakespeare, and this was no play, but reality.

As the sun colors faded, the moon rose behind the stage while yet the daylight lingered; and as twilight darkened, a lime-light cleverly assisted the beams of Lady Luna, shining softly through the leafy screen. Eunice and Edwina observed nothing artificial, but sat silent, hand in hand, entranced, until came the full surrender of piquant, teasing Beatrice. Then with a long breath they looked about them, the harmony of invisible glees and part-songs still in their ears. The gardens were full of shadows. The trees loomed, huge black spheres and ovals, against the sky. Colored designs in myriad fairy lamps gleamed among the grasses, while garlands of airy lanterns swung their soft brightness overhead.

Walking slowly, Eunice and Edwina came out from this enchanted land, talking low. As they pursued their way through a silent and deserted street, they looked and wondered at a cross upraised in its stony pavement. It marked the spot where Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer were burned; but

Baedeker was at home, so the spell of the comedy of ye olden tyme which still held them remained unbroken by a reminder of its tragedy.

From Oxford they pursued the usual path of the tourist through England's garden spots, strayed to their hearts' content about Warwick Castle, and sighed speechless over the gentle beauty of the Avon and its Fall. They clambered through Kennilworth's grand empty spaces, and one day drove to Stratford with a little old Irish driver, who at one point dismounted to give them a spirited account of the occasion when Shakespeare was apprehended for poaching in this very field. He balanced his short body in its battered tall hat over the stile, to show them how the treacherous bars gave way with the bard as he endeavored to flee, and thereby threw him into the hands of justice.

They inspected Shakespeare's bare cottage and the flowery, cosy homeliness of Anne Hathaway's; strolled up the stately arching avenue of limes to the church where Shakespeare is buried; then back in the windless crystal air through the winning pictures of the rural landscape stretching far, far away, and all enchantment in the June weather.

Next they moved on to Wales, and sitting on the pier at Llandudno, far out in the beating waves, thousands of feet from the shore, listened to the orchestra and looked at the wide semicircle of bare rocky cliffs which surrounded the city, while the sea-gulls wheeled and darted above the dashing spray. The Welsh names of places, and especially of houses, excited Miss Pritchard to the point of rebellion.

"You can't tell me those words mean anything!" she said one day, regarding the grouped consonants above the door of a modest home.

"I think myself they just catch up a handful of the alphabet, throw it at the front door, and accept the consequences," returned Edwina.

Conway Castle, with its towers, its drawbridge, and its moat, stirred every line of legendary romance that had ever entered into the girl's heart. They climbed the staircases into its vacant echoing rooms and sat in the deep stone embrasures of windows set in walls fifteen feet thick, and thence looked out upon the same landscape that had greeted the eyes of many a tight-sleeved, long-haired Eleanor and Margaret of past centuries, one of whom Edwina promptly expressed a wish to be.

"I wish I were this minute hearing the hoofs of my good knight's charger, pawing the stones in the courtyard!"

"I guess you'd be thinking more about hot water bags than chargers if you had to sit on these stone seats in November," returned her cousin.

"You forget my fur-trimmed robes," said Edwina loftily, "and the minions that would be running around with braziers of coals for my slippered feet."

"Humph! I think you would soon be begging to be put to sleep again until the day of sealskins and steam heat and cushioned divans."

"Tush! tush! Marry come up! I will not tilt with thee!" and Edwina rose from her rock-bench and led the way down past the ivy-clad walls of the ruined courtyard, endeavoring to trail after her the clinging robes of an Ermengarde.

Not to land with too sudden a shock in the nineteenth century, they walked over to Plas Mawr, a home of the year 1530, which has been maintained unaltered since those occasions when Queen Elizabeth made use of it. Her own and Robert Dudley's initials appear upon the dark carven walls of its low-ceiled, rambling rooms. It is built about an ivy-grown courtyard, and the latticed windows and enormous fireplaces were unhesitatingly dubbed "stunning" by Edwina.

"They were coming along in those days, — coming along," admitted Miss Pritchard leniently. "This is a long step ahead of Conway Castle."

"A step ahead! Is n't everybody trying now to make houses as like this as they possibly can?"

"Well, they don't force you to duck in the doorways," returned Eunice, for the girl's hat was smartly bumped as she passed from one room to the next.

"You think too much of detail," said Edwina, rearranging her crushed bows with dignity.

"There are two things here that make me feel very far from home," said Miss Pritchard, when they had returned to Llandudno and were listening for the last time to the orchestra on the pier. "One is when the band plays 'America' and every Englishman takes off his hat, and I realize it is n't our hymn, and the other is *that*." Eunice pointed to a long painted sign which stretched from end to end of one of the restaurants on the pier: "We make a speciality of the famous American *bonbon* known as popcorn!"

The following day they took the coach for Bettws-y-Coed. The bugle blew, the four horses started, and soon left behind the bare grandeur of the Great Orme for the wooded hills and vales beyond Conway's gray towers. Rain had been threatening, and soon fell in soft showers, and there was a great opening and shutting of umbrellas on the coach.

Edwina looked fondly at her new London umbrella, of which she had taken such fond care that her companion had dubbed it "the baby." It had a pinkish translucent carnelian ball for a handle. Edwina had ransacked London to find the stone, and valued it accordingly. She had had the umbrella made in the Strand, and considered it the satisfactory child of her own brain.

"We don't need two umbrellas, cousin Eunice," she remarked as another shower fell, and many silken collisions took place on the crowded coach. "I 'll stand the baby up between us and hold yours over us both."

When the clouds again parted and the tents were furled, Edwina looked down only to suspect a tragedy. In sudden dread she pulled her dress aside.

Near her feet where she sat at the front of the coach, yawned a treacherous gap. It was too true. Silently, without a moan of farewell, the baby had slipped away. Its slender form, its translucent rosy countenance, the rich, neat necktie of cord and tassels under its smooth chin, had never seemed so charming to its bereaved owner as now, in the light of memory.

"My umbrella is gone!"

"No!"

"Yes."

Sympathetic stirring and lifting of skirts on the coach, where every ramshackle and aged parachute was safe. Frenzied appeal to the guard, who promised to make inquiries on the return trip, and was helped to this resolution by a generous bribe as well as promises of future reward; all destined to be in vain, as Edwina well knew. However, Bettws-y-Coed was in sight; and is there any minor ill, even that of losing one's pet London umbrella, which Bettws is powerless to heal? I trow not.

This fairy-tale village, with its one street nestled at the foot of rising tiers of verdant hills, is a bower of beauty, a haven of rest. Its roses climb higher and bloom larger and for a longer time than elsewhere. Its rivers are more hopelessly and fascinatingly tangled in their wooded curves than others. Its forests are wound — each tree-trunk — with a tiny species of glossy ivy, as if for a fête, while ferns and moss massed in the grass beneath carry out the decorative idea; and the rivers, racing through, plunge in merry little waterfalls from rock to rock. They hold plenty of salmon, too, which come hard and pink to the table. The loveliness of the deep glens takes the breath; and the bird-songs are certainly not set to Welsh words. Dwygyfyleln was one to which Miss Pritchard took especial exception; but, "What 's in a name?" Edwina reminded her soothingly. "When one can lodge in such a village, and have Hovis bread, unsalted butter, clotted cream, and strawberries for breakfast, who can complain?"

They took coaching trips for many miles about, and Eunice forgot the woes of trying to pronounce Gryffydd and Glyndwr in pure rapture at nature's unspoiled beauty. Whether it were the rich weight of the sycamores overhanging the rivers, or the bare green of the smooth, rolling hills on the road to Beddgelert, she still confided to Edwina that she felt yearnings towards bursts of poetry.

It was on the Fourth of July that they mounted the coach for the ride to Beddgelert, and a keen and nipping air sent the collars of golf capes up about the passengers' ears as the bugle blew and the strong horses set off under the clear sky. The driver's high white hat had apparently just received a fresh application of kalsomine. His tight corduroy trousers fitted inside his boots, and his legs described a horseshoe curve. His scarlet coat was scarce brighter than his cropped hair, and his weather-beaten face was as expressionless as if carved in wood; but the hearts of our travelers warmed to him for his wondrous management of his horses. No other goad than a low whistle was needed to increase their speed to a gallop when the heavy coach must thunder up a hill. Not the least of Britain's glory is that there preëminently one sees horses treated as the friends rather than the enemies of man, — that is, after the mutilation of their tails has been accomplished.

Past the Swallow Falls with their myriad restless white wings went the coach. Past low, thick stone walls, moss-cushioned, while the Glaslyn River (plate-Glaslyn, Edwina immediately re-christened it) flowed clear and full beside them as they wound toward the Vale of Gwynant, crown of beauty in the Welsh landscape. When the coach reached this spot it stopped in the road that leads across the mountain-side. Below them lay a vast emerald valley and in its centre Glaslyn Lake, sparkling back like a diamond to the deepening blue above. Opposite rose green mountains, tier on tier, overtopped by majestic Snowdon; and down their sides in steep foaming waterfalls fell the rivers, streaming lakeward. So crystalline was the air, and so still, that the only proof of the distance of these hills was the motionless silence of the falls lying against their green sides like oblong masses of snow.

"No brush could paint it, no words describe it," murmured Eunice with her child's hand in hers.

"I'm glad we have a poet in the family," returned the girl. "When are you going to begin?"

"It is a sight to remember in trouble," went on Eunice. "Such peace I have never dreamed of. We can always recall this in noisy, harassing places. We know that up here, far from any dwelling, is a retreat where peace *is.*

> Vale of Gwynant, happy valley
> Where the sun is ever shining" —

she paused.

"Go *on,* cousin Eunice!" laughed Edwina softly. "You really are catching the divine spark. You can do something fine with 'repining' in the next line but one."

Miss Pritchard laughed too, and blushed as the coach rolled on. She wondered if it were really her little dull self, glowing and enjoying in this new, old world.

CHAPTER IV

WINDERMERE

"But you 're always going away from places," protested Eunice plaintively one evening when Edwina announced that it was time to take up the line of march.

"And don't you always like the new one?" asked the girl.

They were sitting by the still pool, a widening of the river Conway, close to the churchyard, where the water falls into pensive mood and holds a polished mirror to the sky. Gazing downward into the liquid depths they could see birds dipping and soaring above a cloud-flecked firmament, and losing themselves in the pictured woods, in dream-like fashion.

"We do very well here," said Miss Pritchard, looking wistfully off to where the river again flowed swiftly as it wound away beneath the overhanging fans of the sycamores. "I doubt if we find red and white striped roses anywhere else, or such low walls to hang over and watch the tumbling waterfalls. Oh! I 'm sure there 's no place like Betsy!" for in such simple fashion had Eunice relieved herself of the attempt to pronounce Bettws-y-Coed.

A rabbit started up near them and gazed big-eyed at the pair.

"And of course we shall never find a cook like Mrs. Thomas," rejoined Edwina pensively. "There is something so ingratiating in the attitude of the chicken she sends up, with its neat little bacon pantalets, and its heart and gizzard tucked under its arm."

The pool turned pink. "Come, cousin Eunice, one more walk around the meadow."

They rose, and the rabbit vanished into its burrow, only to lift its big eyes once more to watch the intruders move down the wooded path as they sauntered on to meet the Llugwy River, dancing ever round its green curve, to be lost in the embrace of the Conway and flow away to the sea.

Reluctantly next day the travelers slid out of this fairyland down to earth again, landing at Chester. Beneath the lofty vault of its cathedral Eunice listened to the angelic voices of the choir, and with mounting tears gave thanks for her manifold blessings. It seemed to her that all the novelty and recreation of a lifetime were being pressed into these days of kaleidoscopic variety. Whether marveling at the palatial wonders of Eton Hall, set in its spacious and rural park, or leaning on Edwina's arm and wandering in the "Rows" at night, gazing into shop-windows, it was all delightful.

One thing hard for her to fathom was the difficulty in this strange, quaint land, of procuring a drink of water. Often in a restaurant they found that the request for this beverage created confusion and dismay; and after an incredibly long wait, the tepid liquid that was brought was only an exasperation. The peculiarity of English taste was beginning to dawn upon Miss Pritchard. "Think of a land," she exclaimed with uplifted hands, "where they always serve the water warm and the toast cold!"

"But look at their complexions," said Edwina.

"It's too late for me to think of a complexion. I'd give a dollar for a tumbler of ice-water when I want it. There will be comfort in getting back to a place where it does n't require an act of Congress before you can quench your thirst."

"Oh, you are going back some day, are you?"

"I dread the very thought of it," returned Eunice promptly, "but I really think of hanging a card around my neck as they do on dogs: 'Please give me a drink!'"

"They would n't give you water if you did," remarked Edwina.

It was on Lake Windermere that they found an abiding-place so alluring that they lingered there for weeks. It was an old farmhouse rambling among its own flowers, with close green turf that extended to the water's edge. It had been raining the afternoon of their arrival, but when first the lake came into view the sun was struggling with clouds behind the surrounding tiers of hills, making marvelous combinations of light and shade on foliage and water, while all the air was filled with the scent of new-mown hay.

After supper they stood together on the wet velvet of the turf where the lake lapped at their feet, and watched the sun sink toward the mountains. Eunice, her arm around her companion, unconsciously hummed a little song. The girl smiled as she listened. Her cousin had not been wont to sing in Boston, although she had often talked of her girlhood songs and the time when she and Edwina's father had sung in the choir together; but many times on this trip her feelings had found vent in soft musical ebullitions.

A pair of swans sailed toward them, with eager eyes, and proud necks ready to unbend at the first suggestion of bread. "Another time, you pretty things," exclaimed Edwina, moved with gratitude at the touch they gave to the living, changing picture she was watching.

"And to think," said Miss Pritchard with a happy sigh, "that we can pronounce the name of everything around here."

"Shame, cousin Eunice! Are n't Bettws-y-Coed and Tan-y-Bwllch worth any amount of trouble?"

"That was a cunning toy train we took over the slate mountain to Tanny, was n't it?" returned Miss Pritchard reminiscently. "Look at that sky now, Ned! I should think Queen Victoria would be the happiest woman in the world. Her whole island seems to be a garden."

"Ladies!" An apologetic voice made the couple turn, and they saw, advancing gingerly on the pebble walk, their hostess. She had short black hair, dressed by running a wet comb through it the wrong way. Her eyes were large and rolling, and her lips down-drawn at the corners. A woolen shawl was wrapped tightly about her.

"Oh, good evening, Miss Harney. Have you come out to see this beautiful sunset? I wondered that we were the only ones."

"I beg your pardon, ladies, but sister says as how perhaps you don't know that the evening hair by the lake is un'olesome."

"Oh, this pure, sweet air, — how can it be?"

"Sister sayed you had n't any wraps on, so I thought I'd name it."

"Thank you, Miss Harney. We have n't seen your sister yet, but I suppose you told her those rooms will suit us very nicely."

"Yes, miss, thank you, miss. I'm just going to slop the rooms now and they'll be quite ready." A delicate cough. "It *is* damp, miss, is n't it?"

"She's going to do *what?*" asked Miss Pritchard in a low tone as the shawled figure went back toward the house.

"I don't know," laughed Edwina, equally low. "I suppose she means to remove the evidence of our having washed our hands, and fill the pitchers. Will you think of those people we saw at supper shutting themselves away from this unwholesome air? Oh, the loveliness of this beautiful world, and the ingratitude of *folks!*"

These two climbed into their high beds that evening, blissful because for a century of nights people had slept under the same old beams that brought the ceiling so sociably near their recumbent heads.

"Not a bell *last* night," said Edwina triumphantly when she and Miss Pritchard were seated at breakfast the next morning. The clash and clamor at Chester had forcibly reminded them of Oxford.

"No," replied Eunice, "no bells, but swans. Miss Harney," for the latter now entered with a rack of cool toast, "do the swans chatter loudly every morning so early — quarter of five, I think it was?"

"Quarter of — quarter of" — responded Miss Harney, rolling her eyes in respectful confusion — "Oh, you mean quarter to five, miss. I — I hasked sister what was to do with the swans this very morning, and sister sayed she thought the ladies fed them a good bit and it made them come, d' you see, miss?"

"You hear, Edwina? If you feed those swans, be sure and go along the shore farther from the house," said Miss Pritchard.

"Such a cackling, was n't it?" put in Miss Bellair, a white-haired woman who sat next Edwina and spoke in the winning, confiding English manner. "I think we must all be careful how we encourage them; but the boys chivy the poor birds about a good bit, and it makes one feel like coddling them, does n't it?"

Miss Bellair's Scotch friend, Miss Erskine, an elderly woman with short hair and skirts, spectacles and square shoes, completed the small company whom Miss Harney entertained so early in the season. She was a kindly creature with a rugged countenance which unconsciously lighted when her small eyes rested on Edwina. She had talked a good deal to the girl at supper the evening before, with evident enjoyment of her youth and fairness.

"I'm sure, little one, you've no Indian blood in your veins," she remarked now, and continued, unobservant of Eunice's stare of amazement, "we do so often see dark Americans who show the Indian blood very plainly."

Edwina attempted to explain that her nation did not intermarry with the Indians, and Miss Bellair ejaculated: "Fancy!" But it was evident that Miss Erskine would not at once credit the statement.

"You know the straight black hair and aquiline nose are unmistakable," she returned.

"And have you none in your country?" asked Miss Pritchard.

"Not of Indian descent."

"And we have n't either," returned Eunice.

"How good this oatmeal is," said Edwina hastily.

"Passable," admitted Miss Erskine, "but I like my oatmeal full of knots, and I like salt to it always."

"Really?" ejaculated Miss Bellair. "Now, I like mine so you can't see the seeds."

Miss Harney was lingering attentively behind the several chairs. "Sister says," she put in, "that it is 'ard to get one dish of hoatmeal to suit hall tastes."

"So it is," replied Miss Erskine pacifically. "Miss Harney, I 've an old gown that needs sorting. *Do* you know of any one to sort a dress?"

"I 'll hask sister. What is to do, Miss Erskine?"

"Oh, a new braid and a general sorting — mending and that."

Miss Harney's hair and eyes were all uplifted as she left the room repeating: "I 'll hask sister."

"Cousin Eunice and I must explore this dear village to-day," said Edwina. "I want to buy some candy, too. I have n't had any for weeks. Can you tell me of a good candy store?"

The two British ladies exchanged a look of grave perplexity, then Miss Bellair repeated gently: "Candy?"

"Yes, I 'm tired of plain chocolate. They seem to offer it to you everywhere."

"Candy? Oh!" hopefully. "*Do* you mean sweet-stuff?"

"Yes — I suppose so."

"We *have*," very politely, "we have a sweet we call candy. It is very good for coughs; but that, of course, is a boiled sweet. I prefer fondant to any of the boiled sweets, and I fancy that is what you wish. Miss Erskine, *do* you remember that shop just over the bridge?"

"What like shop?"

"Sweet-stuff; where that man told us so much" —

"What like man was he?"

"Well — he — he 'd a squint. You 'll find it," turning to Edwina, "a very good shop, I 'm sure. I think 't will be fine after all, though 't was bitter this morning. You keep right up this road and cross the bridge, and then you 'll find all the sweets a little girl should have."

Miss Pritchard smiled unconsciously as she saw the approval in the British ladies' eyes as they both gazed pleasantly at her child. "I wish they each had an Edwina, poor things," she said to herself.

"Either those folks don't talk English, or I don't," remarked Eunice later when she and Edwina had started on their stroll.

"But don't you like to hear them?"

"Ye-es, I don't object — if they were n't so stupid about the Indians."

"Oh, that rankles?" laughed Edwina.

"And why do they dress like perfect frights?"

"Because it is their nature to. But who cares when they have such pretty manners and that little deferential 'Is n't it?' 'Does n't it?' 'Was n't it?' at the end of every sentence. Everything they say makes me more determined never again to be aggressive."

All travelers in the English lake country know the heart-winning beauty of the places where Eunice and Edwina spent happy hours with the books they never read lying in their laps. Sometimes by clear rivers flowing under the gray arches of an old bridge, or tumbling in wild cascades down the steeps of a hillside forest. Sometimes by mossy rocks on the border of a streamlet where huge trees shaded them, and they watched the delicate water-birds at their graceful play. Each spot had a unique fascination of its own.

They coached through all the surrounding country, bringing back every day their enthusiastic reports to the sister boarders, to whom their remarks were an unfailing source of entertainment. Miss Pritchard had come to feel at ease with her novel companions, and though association brought to each a greater complacence in her own manners and customs, she and the British ladies had become very friendly, and neither side realized the secret sense of superiority enjoyed by the other.

Miss Bellair was stout and stayless, and wore habitually a golden-brown worsted gown which was shorter behind than in front. Its full sleeves were box-pleated into its shapeless shoulders, and the collar was pinned at the throat with a horseshoe of large rhinestones. Across her ample breast a heavy steel chain guarded the watch that hung in a pocket at one side. Miss Erskine was not far behind her in oddity of attire, and they both admired very generously the tailor-made garb of their American friends, without apparently considering for a moment any possible change in their own methods. They were usually sitting on the lawn under one of the semicircle of elm-trees when the tourists returned from their expeditions, and were ready and eager to hear an account of their day.

Miss Erskine interrupted Edwina's talk one afternoon with an apologetic laugh and a glance at her friend. "You do use such strange expressions," she said. "How funny to have a 'lovely time' at Ullswater!"

"What other sort could you have?" returned Edwina from her low grassy seat.

"But, Miss Erskine," put in Miss Bellair, "surely you remember the American lady who was here every week's end with her husband last summer. She was always having 'an elegant time.'"

Edwina laughed with them, while Eunice listened doubtfully. "Well, we 've had a lovely time, and an elegant time — both," declared the girl, "and on the boat at Ullswater there were so many cunning English children."

Miss Bellair and Miss Erskine sobered. "Cunning?" repeated the latter. "What had the children been doing?"

"Why, nothing; but they seem always pretty. Perhaps it is the way they are dressed; but I think English children are the cunningest I ever saw out of a picture."

"O-h! I supposed, of course, you meant they were crafty."

"Don't you call children cunning?" asked Eunice, amazed.

"Not if they are n't, you know. Not if they 're good little children."

"You don't say so!"

"How do you get on without it?" asked Edwina, much entertained by this brush between Old and New England. "See this tiny watch of mine. I call it a cunning watch."

"Fancy!" exclaimed Miss Bellair. "I would say it 's a neat watch — a pretty watch."

The girl shook her head. "It 's not the same. I can't spare 'cunning.' Well, what have you been doing to-day?"

"I? Oh, I 've bean a drive too. A neighbor came to fetch Miss Erskine and me to the charitable society. They are making garments for the poor for next winter."

Miss Erskine gave a sniff of disdain. "And the Tammies! Such awful-like Tammies they were making: too small for a kitten's head! And one old woman wearying us with her talk."

"Ah," said Miss Bellair, "that would be Mrs. Smith."

"Yes, and I 've heard her before. She 's a thorn in my side, that old woman; bound by the traditions of the elders!"

"Some of the ladies," explained Miss Bellair, "were talking of the Pope allowing the priests in South America to marry. Only fancy!"

"Why not?" responded Miss Erskine, whose combativeness seemed to have been roused by the afternoon's meeting. "Did n't Peter, the head of the church, have a wife's mother? She was sick of a fever, poor body. And did you see, Miss Bellair, how Mrs. Price and her daughter were fair ready to fight over the tea? The old woman had to wait for hers till she was pale with rage, and the two glared at each other as they would like to scratch each other's faces."

"Now, now, Miss Erskine," said Miss Bellair soothingly, "never mind. I heard a good riddle to-day. You can all be guessing: Why is the Queen like Scotch weather?"

Miss Erskine resumed the knitting she had dropped. "Because," she hazarded, "because she 's — changeable?"

"Ah, now," reproachfully, "you would n't say that of our Queen!"

"H'm," rejoined Miss Erskine cautiously. "She 's a decent body."

"I suppose," said Edwina, "it 's something about raining."

Miss Bellair directed an admiring look at the sunny hair and clear eyes. "That 's very clever, my dear. You 're very near it."

"But you 'll have to tell us, I 'm sure," said Miss Pritchard.

Miss Bellair gave a pleased little nod. "Well, then, it 's because she keeps on reigning and reigning and reigning, and never gives the son a chance."

The Americans applauded, and Miss Bellair's pleased expression changed to one of pain as she clapped her hand to her cheek. "Such twinges as me tooth gives me to-day!"

Miss Pritchard exclaimed sympathetically. She and Edwina had marveled many a time at the frail, dark, or false teeth in the average English mouth; and Eunice's involuntary thought was: "I'm glad she has one of her own left to ache, poor thing!"

"It's a tooth I had scraped and stuffed last winter," explained Miss Bellair, "and now something ails it. It's very tiresome."

"They're always tiresome — teeth," remarked Miss Erskine. "I had a frightful toothache once, and I stopped it myself. It was very wrong of me, was n't it?"

She fixed Eunice with her gaze, and Miss Pritchard did n't know what to reply, stopping the toothache seeming rather laudable to her.

"I stopped it with gutta percha; but it hurt me worse than ever; so I took the stuff out with a hat-pin and put in wadding. I'm very unlucky with my teeth," she went on, knitting busily. "Stumps are of some use, but I can't even have stumps, as so many people can. They always decay."

Meanwhile Miss Bellair had been looking into space and poking with her finger around her offending molar. At last she brought to view a small black lump.

"There's the stuffing from me tooth!" she announced.

"How teasing!" commented her friend.

Edwina, feeling a shade hysterical, hastened to speak. "It is such an awful way to spend money — on dentists and doctors," she remarked.

"Doctors!" exclaimed Miss Erskine. "I'm never without one for my neuralgia, nor have been this twenty years."

"Does n't it vex you to spend so much money that way?"

"Not a cent, my dear, does it cost me. My father was a physician, and they charge me nothing. If they did, I should have spent all my substance, like the woman in the Bible — poor decent body!"

There was an old piano in the farmhouse, and upon Miss Harney's hasking Sister, it was discovered that Sister sayed she would be pleased to have it used; and Edwina found a delighted audience, uncritical of the piano's failings as well as her own.

"Chopin is all very well," said Miss Erskine after Edwina had played one of the Nocturnes, "but do play something vulgar. I like vulgar music best."

Upon which the girl began with gusto playing American coon songs, which called forth rapturous approval, Miss Erskine protesting at each new air that she remembered it well, it being a reel which her mother had played when she was a child.

"Why, no!" said Miss Pritchard, thinking to explain; but Edwina shook her head, and so Miss Erskine knitted on and tapped her foot to the marked rhythm and continued to recognize and be happy in reels of her childhood, dating from the "Golden Slippers" down to the latest favorite of the American street.

"Does your tooth feel better, Miss Bellair?" asked Eunice that evening as they were parting.

"Oh, yes, thanks. The back has broken off, and it will be quite right now," was the cheerful response.

"Here comes Miss Harney," said Edwina, as she and Miss Pritchard sat under an elm-tree darning stockings the next morning. "What do you suppose Sister has sayed now: that there's dew on the grass, and that it's very un'olesome to be sitting in it?"

Sister still remained, after the passage of a fortnight, an invisible oracle, and Edwina's curiosity concerning her could scarcely be restrained.

"Good-morning, Miss Harney. We were just saying what a fortunate woman you are to have this dear old homestead. I don't know how we are ever going to get strength enough of mind to leave it."

Miss Harney looked pleased. The lugubrious corners of her mouth often in these days presented less contrast to her uplifted hair and eyes. She liked her foreign boarders. "Well, miss, I sayed to sister we never 'ad ladies that gave less trouble."

"Oh, thank you, Miss Harney. I never tire of looking at the low roof, — how it cuddles under the very lowest branches of these towering elms," said Edwina.

"Yes. Sister says our holm-trees are as fine as any on the lake; but she likes hash-trees better 'erself. Sister sayed only this morning there was nothing like a havenue of hash-trees for making a 'andsome harch."

"'M. Indeed?"

"Yes, ladies. I came to speak about dinner. I hasked sister if she thought you might like it if we 'd a different sort of bread. There 's so much crust and so little crumb to that we 'ave."

Edwina, seeing her cousin incapable of reply, spoke: "Do whatever you like about the white bread, so long as you keep on with the Hovis."

"Thank you, miss; and about dessert, miss. Sister sayed you might like a shape for a change. We 'd a good many tarts lately."

"A — I" — hesitated Edwina.

"I hasked sister," Miss Harney's lips drooped and her eyes sought the treetops, "'ow the cake came to be sad last night; and sister sayed that haccidents will 'appen, and they will, won't they, miss?"

"Don't distress yourself about us," said Edwina, smiling.

"Sister says," fervently, "it 's 'er haim to please. It 's both our haims, miss."

"I 'm sure it is, and everything is very nice; but you were speaking of tarts, Miss Harney. I do think there 's too much of one thing in England, and that is gooseberries."

"Really, miss? Thank you for naming it. Then I'll hask sister to 'ave a shape to-day."

The two tourists exchanged glances when Miss Harney, her mind lightened of its load of the heavy cake, had gone back to the house.

"Is n't it all fun?" exclaimed Edwina softly. "I suppose a shape must be blanc-mange or something in a mould. Hurry up with that last stocking, Eunice, my love. We have a lot of business before us to-day." Edwina drove her own needle rapidly. "The steamer around the lake, a canoe for me to explore in, if you'll promise not to worry."

"Ned, don't! Please don't, dear, — all alone!" Eunice dropped her stocking.

Edwina shrugged her shoulders mutinously.

Miss Pritchard made a remarkable concession. "On your wedding trip you can go canoeing. He'll be there to take care of you. This," — Eunice laughed, — "remember, this is mine."

Edwina looked at her cousin's face, — rosy, and younger, it seemed to her, than when she had first seen it more than a decade ago; and the intense tenderness she often felt for her mysterious loss and suffering came over the girl.

"Well, I suppose I must submit; but to which particular incarnation of all selfishness are you going to give me?"

"To nobody we've seen yet," returned Miss Pritchard promptly. "Let's not think of him," and she began to sing: —

"'Let's be happy while we may:
Banish gloom and sadness.
Grief may come another day;
Now we welcome gladness.'"

"I declare," laughed Edwina, "of late you have a song for every occasion."

"Do you remember your father's singing, Ned?"

"No, I'm afraid I don't."

"He had the best voice in our town," remarked Eunice simply; and Edwina, though she did n't in the least believe it, loved her so much that she took the stocking from her hand and finished it for her, — great proof of affection on Miss Wilder's part.

"Come, little one, have your fortune told," said Miss Erskine after supper that evening. She was shuffling the cards at a small table, while Miss Bellair sat near.

"She's just wonderful," said the latter. "She's the Scotch second sight, I do believe. She's just promised me a splendid present of a gold watch-chain."

"What a mercy that would be!" thought Edwina.

"Tell cousin Eunice's first, won't you?"

"Certainly, we will tell them all," said Miss Erskine; and she dealt the cards in little groups, face up, and proceeded with the usual hints of the past and promises for the future.

Eunice bore with equanimity being told that she had experienced a love affair from which she had

had a fortunate escape; but when it came to hearing that Edwina was soon to have a letter from a dark man who was very sad on account of her absence, she writhed in her chair. Ralph Glenn was dark.

"I don't like fortune-telling!" she remarked curtly.

Miss Erskine laughed good-naturedly. "You think 't is all havers; but wait till the little one gets that present ye see there. It would be a grand gown, perhaps, — or a jewel."

"Cousin Eunice knows she would have to be the one to give it to me; that does n't comfort her any. No, we can't have any gowns and jewels. The customs are such a bother."

"But you 'll have no trouble going to France, and you don't carry too much tea over nor bring too much tobacco back."

"I like one just about as well as the other," remarked the girl.

"There 's a deal of clever smuggling, though," said Miss Erskine. "I knew of a woman who 'd an imitation dog that she filled with things and carried a long time before she was found out."

Edwina nodded. "I heard of a woman who carried a baby through in the same way."

Miss Bellair dropped her knitting. "Fancy!" she ejaculated, gazing at the speaker. "I never knew there was a duty on babies!"

Miss Erskine explained, and Edwina, ashamed of her own sudden laughter, changed the subject.

"There are four of us," she said. "Let 's play whist."

"I can't abide whist," declared Miss Erskine, absently shuffling her cards.

"Do you know the game?"

"Ah," leniently. "I 've a dim twinkle of it. It 's just capers."

"Then let us all go out and see the moon rise."

"'T will be damp now," objected Miss Bellair.

"Why, the sun has scarcely set. See, it is still quite light. Cousin Eunice and I are going. You 'd better come."

The two British ladies looked doubtfully wistful; the girl's elastic youth and vivacious, pretty face fascinated them. Why was not Miss Pritchard properly in awe of evening damp? The latter looked kindly upon them. Their open admiration of her child warmed her heart, and though she would have much preferred to ramble alone with Edwina, she added her persuasion, and the consequence was that, much shawled as to shoulders and wrapped as to head, they dared the twilight beauty of the lake shore, where the orange light still glimmered behind the hills.

"Would n't it be fun if we could meet Sister?" said Edwina as she moved on beside Miss Erskine. "Don't you suppose at this hour she might inspect her estate?"

"Oh, do you mean the elder Miss Harney? Have you not seen her yet?"

"Never. Why, have you?" eagerly.

"Ah, once, over the fence."

"Then there *is* such a person. I began to think England might be full of Mrs. Harrises."

"Eh? No, she 's Mrs. Nobody — just plain Miss Harney. She 's a decent body. They 've their own pride, you see. She cooks and works hard, and just slips on a good frock to run out maybe to prayer-meeting or the like; so her sister meets the boarders and waits on them. 'T is their division of labor."

"You think we 're all so disagreeable, it 's a fair one?" laughed the girl. "Oh, dear, lovely Windermere," she exclaimed, gazing over the lake. "Why do we have to go away!"

"Me dear," solemnly, "Miss Pritchard should forbid your coming out in that blouse — and nothing on your head."

"My wig is thick, you see."

Miss Erskine gazed, narrowing her eyes, at the fair thick waves of hair framing the expressive face. "Ye never mean — ye 're chaffing!"

"Yes, I 'm chaffing, and I 'm warm. Let us all go around to that clump of trees."

The Lady Moon lifted her pale, fair face into view above the hollow of a hill, and all the lake trembled and sparkled in gladness. Miss Erskine and Miss Bellair forgot hygiene for the moment, and in the shelter of the foliage gazed with pleasure at their surroundings. Edwina skipped lightly upon a rock round which the ripples broke, and from which she could see her cousin wander alone along the shore and pause, her face toward the peaceful loveliness of sky, hills, and water. The girl could hear the murmur of song that came unconsciously from her lips, and note the pensive sweetness of her smile as she stood long, looking, thinking, singing, forgetful of her companions. That picture of cousin Eunice remained in the girl's heart for many a year.

Days afterward Miss Pritchard found folded between the leaves of her diary these verses: —

BY WINDERMERE

Aloof she stood among the trees
Like one who some sweet vision sees;
The sunset's glow still shimmered clear,
The moon had ris'n on Windermere.

She faced the wooded mountains steep
Where watch about the lake they keep,
Then soft tones fell upon the ear,
And Eunice sang by Windermere.

She sang of waves and whitening sails,
Of trusting love that never fails;
Of Nature's beauty, — all the while
Upon her lips a pensive smile.

The moonlight touched her silvered hair;
Her thoughts had fled we knew not where,
As soft she sang by Windermere
The songs of many a vanished year.

In days to come, at sunset's glow
Again will sound that singing low,

And I shall see those blessed eyes
Look far beyond the evening skies.
Ah ! then may Heaven's own peace draw near,
As on that night by Windermere.

CHAPTER V

SCOTLAND

NATURE makes a crescendo of beauty from Windermere to Derwent Water, and thence increases through the Scotch lakes until at Loch Katrine the climax is reached. This trip was all enjoyed by our travelers under the best circumstances.

Miss Harney bade them farewell with almost tearful unction, and Miss Pritchard remarked that she should be glad to say good-by to her sister. At this Miss Harney's eyes sought the clouds. "I hasked sister if she would n't just step here; but she sayed to give you her respects, as she was busy just this minute with her shape. I sayed to sister this morning early when it was foggy that the very hatmosphere was weeping because you were going, and sister sayed quite so, but it would burn hoff, which it will, and good-by, ladies."

The travelers responded to the waved salutations of their fellow-boarders, each framed by a protecting window above stairs, for there were still traces of mist in the air; then the coach with its four horses and scarlet-coated driver came dashing along under the trees. The luggage was put aboard, they climbed up the ladder, and off and away they went from lovely Windermere, while the mist-veil lifted fast.

The driver's round, red, jolly face was often turned to them as the only Americans who happened to be on the well-filled coach. He entertained all his party with the ease of a raconteur of seventeen years' experience.

Past Rydal Water and Thirlmere and Grasmere, with all their wealth of poetical association, they drove; then up, up to the tiny Wytheburn church at the summit of Dunmail Raise, where every one dismounted to read on its walls what the great poets have written in praise of the miniature house of God. Near this spot was a large pile of rocks. When the coach had started again, the driver indicated this strange monument with his thumb.

"Ye see the cairn yonder. Some say King Dunmail lies buried there; but some others that the Devil himself was speeding across with a large sack of stones one time, and it broke right there. The last time 'e was ever in the Lake Country," added the driver pensively; then he turned, and his twinkling eyes rested on Eunice and Edwina. "They do say 'e 's gone to America."

It was a wild country of solitary loveliness through which the coach now wound its way. A weather-beaten little house above on a hilltop was pointed out by the driver as his seat of learning. "Ye can see it 's a 'igh school," he remarked. "I was born on a farm 'ereabouts, and that yonder," pointing to a small lonely building on a far hill, "was the church that was attended by all the folk for five mile far and near. But it was 'ard to get a congregation!" He shook his jolly head. "*I* always went, of course, but the clergyman refused to preach to less than three; beside 'e knew I was such a good boy, 'e used to send me 'ome. But one Sunday morning I remember well the minister came to the tavern and said 'e must 'ave a congregation, for 'e 'ad to publish banns. The 'ole crowd wanted to know whose banns; but the clergyman would n't tell them, so they up and followed 'im to church to find out who was going to be married!"

Arrived in Keswick, Eunice and Edwina after dinner drove to the disappointing Falls of Lodore, and then around the most beautiful of all the English lakes. The charms of Derwent Water were still vividly with them when days later they stepped upon the boat at Balloch Pier on Loch Lomond.

The day was cloudless; the heather beginning to bloom on the mountain sides; the free, inspiring air was intoxicating. "It 's different, different," said Edwina, delightedly gazing at the changing views of the grand mountain steeps. "It is n't cosy any more, like England."

"What 's that noise?" exclaimed Eunice.

"Bagpipes. Come." Edwina sprang up and led her cousin to where they could see the players, a man and girl in Scottish dress. Their costumes were handsome, and they wore many medals. The girl was bewitching. Her plaid blew in the breeze.

Her hair waved under the jaunty Tam as her rosebud mouth closed on the pipe, and her easy, graceful air as she tapped her buckled shoe in time with the rhythm of the familiar air charmed the beholders.

"She 's a picture if she 'd only stop that squealing," commented Miss Pritchard. "I 'd give them a shilling gladly if they 'd keep still and let me look at them."

"I wonder if they will take money," said Edwina.

"You do!" ejaculated her cousin scornfully. She was still smarting from the demand of extra sixpences by youths whom she had feed that morning according to Baedeker.

However, Edwina watched when the tune was done, and saw that not only did the couple not ask for money, but when a shilling was offered the man by one of the passengers, he courteously declined. Then Edwina approached the girl, who with modest pride answered her questions, showed her handsome bagpipes, and explained the different medals with which her velvet bodice was hung. One of these, she said naïvely, meant the best player in Scotland. Another she had won at Partick in a competition with twenty-five pipers.

At the next stop the pipers left the boat, and though Edwina dilated on their skill and importance, Eunice declared her joy at their departure, for they had been complaisant as to playing up to the end.

"But think of the local color, and how characteristic it was," said Edwina, clasping the Scotch plaid miniature copy of "The Lady of the Lake" she had secured at Glasgow.

"So is Ben Lomond," returned Eunice dreamily, "and so are the gulls and the rocks and the waves. How lovely to lean back and watch them quietly!"

As they sat in silence but for the swish of waves and breeze, a party of men and women at the end of the boat began softly to sing "Loch Lomond." Eunice and Edwina exchanged a look of pleasure.

"Oh, ye 'll tak' the high road,
And I 'll tak' the low road,
And I 'll be in Scotland afore ye.
But me and my true love,
We 'll never meet again
On the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond."

It was at Inversnaid that they left the boat and went up to the hotel nestling in the wooded hillside beside a steep, musical waterfall. In the late afternoon they threaded their way among the fern-beset forest paths along the shore, with ever wilder and lovelier views of lake and jutting crag breaking upon their delighted vision.

The song had been floating through Eunice's head all the afternoon, and as she stood now on a point of rock, her arm slipped through Edwina's, and her child's hand in hers, the scene brought it to her afresh.

"The wee birdie sings and the wild flowers spring,
And in sunshine the waters are sleeping;

> But the broken heart it kens nae second spring again,
> Though the waefu' may cease frae their greeting."

She smoothed her child's hand silently as the song sung itself. Long, long years since, she had ceased greeting. One broken heart had known a second spring, and felt nothing but tenderness, nothing but thankfulness.

The next morning the travelers mounted the coach, finding places near the driver, whose Scotch reserve melted when Edwina, soon after the start, made a lucky reference to the pipers on yesterday's boat. His pleasant weather-beaten face lighted with enthusiasm as he regarded her. He knew of "that lady," and was eager to hear her. He smiled when Edwina mentioned her doubt as to offering the players money, and explained that when pipers accept money on the street or in such situations as yesterday's, they are no longer eligible to take part in competitions. This couple had been on their way to some competition, and it was evident that the driver considered that these Americans had been blessed beyond their deserts, inasmuch as the pipers had happened upon their boat. Eunice recalled the blaring monotony of the man's accompaniment and the persistent shrilling of the girl's melodies, but wisely held her peace.

The coach mounted higher and higher, and the ladies nestled in their golf capes while admiring what the driver called the "pretty scennery."

"This cold air is good for the horses," said

Edwina, who always had an eye to the laborious pulls uphill, of which there were many on this steep drive.

"Yes, the heat is varra kullin' on them, varra kullin'," was the response.

High above the hilltops ran the telegraph wires, hung at frequent intervals with little squares of wood that the grouse might see, and be spared from killing themselves as they flew over.

At last Stronachlachar was reached, and on the shores of Loch Katrine Eunice and Edwina sat down to wait for the boat, and read on in "The Lady of the Lake." Every captain and coach driver in that region knows the poem from cover to cover. It is the best of guide-books to the beauties of the Trossachs. The captain of their boat to-day was a didactic and deliberate Scotchman who had grown old in the service of enlightening tourists, and whose oracular speech seemed in contrast to the unfettered, lavish beauty of the wild shores he apostrophized. By the time Ellen's Isle was reached he was surrounded by a respectful audience.

"'T is Ellen's Isle yonder, and in the small space ye 'll find for'rty varieties of trees, the seeds having been transpor'rted there be the bir'rds. Across," pointing, "ye 'll see the silver str'rand where Fitz-James fir'rst saw Ellen Douglas. Walter Scott tells it pr'retty well, pr'retty well,— though poets do polish up a bit."

Some one expressed a fear that the thinly overspread sky threatened rain. The captain stared straight before him.

"Yesterday 't was war'rm. Folks were groomblin' at the sun. To-day 't is the clouds. Mor'rtals is ill to satisfy."

Eunice and Edwina smiled at each other. On Loch Katrine, where Nature strikes her loftiest note, and Beauty rests unapproached on mountain, vale, and wave, if mortal man for a moment forgets to worship, he is indeed ill to satisfy.

A few days later the travelers found themselves again under sunlit skies, steaming up the Clyde between curving shore lines, on their way to Oban. Crowds of sea-gulls were their companions in the broad river-spaces, the soft, white fluttering of myriad wings floating like restless, changing cloudlets above their heads. At Ardrishaig they had to leave the breezy big boat for the small craft on the Crinan canal.

"Ah!" sighed Edwina as the crowd of traveling humanity began to bump elbows, "if only all Britain were not going to Oban to-day!"

"Now this is as cosy as England," remarked Eunice, smiling, as the boat moved on toward the first lock, which, when they reached it, proved that Scotland could be hot.

There were twelve of these locks, in each of which they gasped with the heat, uncheered by the Highlanders in kilts, and Irishmen with green coats and shillelahs, who gave characteristic songs and dances on the shore and were rewarded by coppers tossed from the boat. But in the cooler spaces of the canal the fine old trees and pretty shores gave the effect of a romantic river, and seemed like a return to English scenes.

Miss Pritchard was greatly interested in the working of the locks, and hung over the boat side at every stop to observe the ingenious machinery. Edwina busied herself in studying her books and wrestling with the intricacies of Butes and Firths and Forths, and felt tired as well as hot by the time Crinan was reached. The tourists poured off the little Linnet and boarded the large boat that awaited them on the salt waves beyond.

"What water is this?" asked Eunice eagerly as they emerged on the spacious deck and looked about.

"Oh, the Forth of something," returned Edwina curtly, — "July, I guess by the feeling."

"You need your lunch," laughed Miss Pritchard.

They ate this meal with a crowd of other famished ones, and, comforted within and decidedly cool without, wrapped themselves well to sit on deck and view the winding into the bay of Oban. No longer the verdant foliage of wide-spreading trees attracted the eye. This bleak, bright, wind-swept coast was gray with rock and singularly vivid in the green of its bare hills. Irregular, steep islands marked the boat's course until Oban, built against its hillside, came into view.

"Somehow," said Edwina, "I never felt so far from home in my life."

"Somehow," returned Miss Pritchard, "neither did I; but neither did I ever taste such exhilarating air."

"I feel that, too; and I need the courage, for I have n't an address in this town, and you 're tired, little Eunice, — you need n't deny it."

"It does seem queer," mused Miss Pritchard aloud, "to look at a town like that, and to know that not a soul in it is glad we 're coming, nor would care if we slipped off the boat."

"Oh yes, there is somebody who is glad," returned Edwina, "only the creature is not aware of it yet. It 's the woman who is going to make sixteen shillings per out of us."

"Then there are our letters," added Eunice more cheerfully. Not that she cared especially for letters. She had her world with her; but Miranda's occasional assurance that the apartment was intact was always welcome.

Their first move on landing was to drive to the post-office, and, as usual, there were a few letters for Miss Pritchard and a handful for Edwina. At this office, also, they procured some suggestions as to an abiding-place, and without stopping to open their mail they set forth at once. Miss Pritchard was opposed to hotels as being noisy; so, after several disappointments, their driver stopped before a house so high above the bay that the view of every island and shore line was unobstructed. An interview with Miss McDonald, the hostess, being satisfactory, the travelers were soon installed.

"Here, you see, is the woman who is glad we came to Oban," said Edwina, as in their wrappers the two sat that evening overlooking the beauteous bay from a window which had the dominating effect of a balloon. "Are your letters interesting?"

"Miranda and the lawyer," returned Miss Pritchard. "Everything is all right. What are yours?"

Edwina had her letters in her lap. She tossed to her cousin one she had just opened. "Perhaps this is the one Miss Erskine foretold," she said, laughing and coloring a little.

Miss Pritchard read Ralph Glenn's bright sentences with a solemn countenance. "If he had good sense," she said when she had finished, "he would know that an extra correspondent is nothing but a nuisance when one is traveling. I hope you 'll tell him you have no time to write."

"Why, this is from Mr. Champion!" said Edwina, surprised, as she glanced over a sheet she had just opened. It was her turn to look grave, and Eunice noticed apprehensively how her color deepened with annoyance.

"What 's he writing for?" she asked. Champion had never been mentioned between them since that unlucky episode at Ascot.

"There it is." Edwina handed her the letter and proceeded to open the next one.

Miss Pritchard felt uncomfortable as she read the young man's expressed hope that they had reached London safely on the evening of the races. He wrote that he had called the following day at their hotel, regretted not finding them, and that on his return to London from one of his cathedral trips he had managed to discover their address, and now hoped that he might receive a word of assurance that their travels were proving satisfactory.

She looked up and met her child's eyes half-apologetically. "I 'm sure he 's very *polite*, Ned?" she suggested.

Edwina's mental picture was still vivid: the shining drag and its glistening horses contrasting with the ramshackle little wagon in which with their cockney companions they had jolted over the dusty road to Windsor. She knew she ought by this time to see the incident in a humorous light, and disliked herself because she could n't. She nodded. "Quite unnecessarily polite," she replied.

"What a trouble he must have had to find our address," said Eunice reproachfully.

"There were a number of more sensible things he might have been doing."

"But you can't leave a note like that unanswered," ejaculated Miss Pritchard with feeling.

"You may write him," said Edwina, smiling. "Tell him I 've sprained my wrist."

"Ned Wilder!"

"Oh, we 'll attend to him sometime." The girl laughed at her cousin's expression. "Meanwhile, where 's that little song of yours: —

"'Let's be happy while we may.'

Don't you want to read these letters from the girls? Who do you think is engaged? Fanny Ardmore. She has written me all about him. He's musical — you know she is — and no taller than she is — that's rather too bad. Then she says he is jolly and gay, but not sporty, and he is n't afraid of mice" —

"Is n't" — Eunice laughed.

"Oh, well, she is, awfully," said Edwina seriously. "She is so happy, you must read the letter. You see," added the girl mischievously, "Fanny has never been instructed that men are monsters with a large M. She does n't know enough to shudder at her fate and realize that she ought to be more afraid of men than of mice."

Miss Pritchard's smile flickered out, and she pressed one little hand over the ring she wore. The girl regretted her jest.

"Ah, cousin Eunice, we ought not to be keeping our eyes indoors. The sun is going down." All the water of the bay was pink, and the Islands of Mull and the Shepherd's Hat lay black upon it. They watched the colors change and fade, and in the long late twilight the lights twinkle out on the shipping, far below their eyrie.

"Another place to want to spend our lives in," said Edwina at last, sleepily. "Dear me! what a number of incarnations it would take to do justice to all these beauties!"

Miss McDonald's ménage proved a very attractive one. She had less difficulty than her maid in adjusting herself to the peculiarities of these odd Americans; but Edwina expected yet to see pleasant Scotch Annie rambling on the hilltops and wringing her hands in the endeavor to grasp the unnatural fact that her new ladies did not want tea at breakfast, did want it at lunch, and did not want it at four o'clock. One phenomenon she grappled with and grasped: namely, that they liked cold water *to drink!* This unique desire having threatened with nervous prostration each British household they had entered, Eunice and Edwina were the more touched with Annie's zeal to please them, — a zeal which she evidenced by bringing a pitcher of water and glasses to their rooms immediately after breakfast and repeating the process at short intervals all day. She evidently concluded that they were afflicted with some mysterious inward fever which required frequent assuaging.

The morning after their arrival Miss McDonald came to the drawing-room to consult with them on the subject of meals. She was a small dark woman with the brightest of eyes and the most deliberate and reposeful manner of speech. In contrast to the ingratiating little "Is n't it?" "Was n't it?" "Does n't it?" which modifies each declaration of an Englishwoman, Miss McDonald's remarks, like those of her compatriot captain on Loch Katrine, were all statements.

"I thought I heard the note of a bullfinch downstairs this morning, Miss McDonald," said Edwina.

"Ah, you heard Bully."

"And I was glad to. I had a bullfinch once. What sweet pets they are!"

"Mine came to me. I never knew how. I came up the steps into my vestibule one day, and there lay what looked to be a bit of pink cotton. I stooped. It was an unfledged bird which had not yet its eyes open. It could not have climbed in there alone. I have a theory at which my brother laughs. I 've always believed that Robin helped him in."

"Who is Robin?" asked Edwina, while Eunice asked Miss McDonald to sit down. She declined with gentle decision, and never during the many long talks the three had together did the Scotch lady descend to a chair. She reminded Edwina of certain dolls of her childhood whose physical limitations made such indulgence impossible.

"Robin is a bird who has nested near my house for seventeen years. Not this house always. I moved five years ago, and for many days I missed the little fellow. At last I met him on the street. 'Why, Robin!' said I, 'don't you know where I am?' I suppose he followed me home; for next day he was eating on the new window-sill as familiarly as he had on the old one."

"For seventeen years!" repeated Miss Pritchard.

"Yes. He still comes. You can see him any day. At the coldest periods in winter he stays in the house. At meal-time he perches on the chandelier and watches us lay the table. If we put down spoons, he knows there is going to be rice or something that he likes, and he stays; but if he sees only forks he flies out."

Edwina's mental attitude would have found natural vent in a low whistle; but Miss McDonald's manner-of-fact manner seemed to refute the suspicion of exaggeration.

"But in pleasant weather Robin comes no further than the window. Once, however, when I was ill for days and he missed me, he got uneasy, so he came into the house and upstairs, where he had never flown before, and searched till he found me in bed. He just looked at me, and away he flew."

"The cunning thing!"

"No, he was n't afraid, but he was satisfied. Yes," after a pause, "I 've always thought 't was Robin found Bully out of the nest, and knowing he would get good treatment here, helped him into my doorway; and now that little helpless pink bit is the tyrant of the house."

"I must meet him!" said Edwina.

"If you are in the house this afternoon at three and will come to my room, you will see him. He is a creature of habit, and demands that I shall be one too."

Eunice and Edwina were very fond of birds, and they returned from a pilgrimage among the cairngorm shops to keep this tryst, though they could have wished that Bully had not been quite so early a bird. When they entered Miss McDonald's room the bullfinch was hopping about the carpet gathering such shreds as he could find, and only paused in this occupation when Edwina whistled to him. Swift and sidewise he hopped across to her, and she stooped and nodded to him. He turned tail and head toward her and bowed with most courteous *empressement*, after the manner of his kind.

"Just to think," she sighed, "of being in a country where bullfinches grow in nests instead of in bird-stores!"

"He knows his friends," smiled Miss McDonald. "You understand how to treat him."

The little fellow continued to courtesy and call in return for Edwina's soft whistle and open flattery; but an idea seemed suddenly to strike him. He bent his head to one side, glanced up at Miss McDonald, and then flew out at the open door.

"It is three o'clock," she said.

They could hear a loud repeated cry in the corridor.

"He has found the door closed," explained Miss McDonald. The others followed as she passed into the hall, where her pet was making his wants known. As soon as she opened the door they all followed the whirr of his light wing, where he led to the kitchen sink. Here he perched and called peremptorily.

"He wants me to turn on the faucet," she remarked, suiting the action to the word. The bullfinch hopped down into its spray and took an elaborate and luxurious bath.

"He won't take a bath anywhere else or at any other time," said Miss McDonald. "There you 'll see Robin on the sill if you 'll turn quietly," she added.

Her guests obeyed, and saw on the stone ledge of the window the venerable little robin, rather faded as to plumage, eating away busily.

"Chaffy 'll be here too, perhaps."

"Is there another?" asked Edwina.

Miss McDonald bent her head. "My chaffinch has been coming for many years too. His little wife was hurt one day, and I took her in and kept her in a cage. Its door was open, and Chaffy came and went as he liked. After a while she became so much better she began going with him and coming back again; but I saw at last that she was well able to be out, and after that I did n't urge them to stay. That was some time ago," added Miss McDonald with unbroken seriousness. "Last spring we had a great grief; Chaffy lost his wife."

"Ah!" exclaimed Edwina sympathetically. "I wish we could see the little widower. Do look at Bully!" and her laugh drove the robin from the sill, for the bedraggled bullfinch, too heavy to fly, shook himself, looking out from his matted and clinging feathers with unnaturally big eyes, his forlorn little neck having a plucked appearance.

"You look like a fright!" exclaimed the girl, stooping her head to him. He struggled up to a low wooden shelf, and turning on her, opened his miniature parrot beak, and squawked indignant comments on her indelicacy for a minute before proceeding with his toilet.

Miss McDonald's birds and her tales about them constituted a powerful rival to the other charms of Oban; but Eunice and Edwina took many of the excursions round about. Their Scotland was not a country of clouds and rain, and it was a heavenly clear morning that they took the boat for the islands of Iona and Staffa. This trip was indeed a voyage of discovery to them. They did not wonder that this region is called the Norway of Scotland. The wild beauty of islands, crags, and mountains, and the vivid coloring of the water, were all novel. They passed steep and lonely islands where only gulls and cormorants hold sway, and about the rocky coast strange creatures were diving. Porpoises rolled about the boat, and gulls followed them so closely that one could look straight into their eyes as they uttered a plaintive, querulous note like the cry of a kitten, then turned and dived and swam lightly upon the wave. Gulls are the ducks of Scotland, to be met on many an inland watercourse.

As they neared Iona its sandy beaches grew pure white in the sun, and the waves about its shores assumed vivid tints, — purples, blues, light greens.

"I have n't seen any coloring like that," said

Miss Pritchard, " since I was a little girl in the country and carried a rainbow fan to church."

The steamer when it anchored seemed floating in a liquid emerald of exquisite transparence. Eunice and Edwina stepped into one of the small boats manned by voluble and incomprehensible Gaelic boatmen, and soon set foot on that historic soil where thirteen hundred years ago began the first record of Christian history in Scotland. Is this the same island which legend records as the haven of that little Roman band of Christ's followers who fled from the adulteration of their religion under Constantine, to find a spot where they could remain true to the simple, strong, healing faith of the Master?

It is said of this company that when a ship appeared on the horizon they prayed for a mist to arise from the sea and shield them from discovery, and that their prayer was answered; but at last their descendants swerved from this purity of faith. They no longer prayed to be shielded, and so a mist arose in their own minds and hearts. Strangers came, their faith grew less, and the healing power was lost. Primitive Christianity gradually disappeared, not to be regained and grasped by mortals until a second thousand years was well on its way to completion.

Eunice and Edwina rambled over the soft green flower-strewn fields, marveling at the stone ruins of ancient monasteries and nunneries and the crude carvings of ancient days, — all set in the light and color and sparkle of a sea that seemed incapable of mist.

From this scene their ship took them to Staffa. In small boats they rowed deep into Fingal's Cave. Its stones are gems of pink and red, and roseate reflections brighten its shadowy depths. They walked on the tops of its well-set pillars across the island, wondering, wondering. Miss McDonald lent them an Ossian when they reached home, and they read that tale of Fingal's son.

But the day the travelers went to Loch Awe was quite as enjoyable. What a good thing it is for those fortunate pilgrims who do know Loch Awe that everybody does n't! Do the knowing ones come back with fingers on lips, hoping to go again sometime, and realizing that where "every prospect pleases" man is apt to be especially "vile"? Otherwise how is it that a bed is obtainable in this paradise, or a seat in its little pleasure-boat?

Through a mountainous country of bracken and gorse, heather and harebells, Eunice and Edwina reached this gem of a lake one day and took their places in the sunny corner of a waiting boat which promised further enchantment. Many of the lofty Bens are about this loch, among them Ben Cruachan and Ben Lui. Before these stand soft wooded hills and deep gorges, whose reflections form patches of bright indigo-blue and deep green in the waves, as if even the water were trying to be plaid. Farthest back against the sky the more distant mountains take opal tints, and all these guardians lovingly surround their little loch, which faithfully mirrors their beauties while it laps the foot of ruined Castle Kilchurn.

Edwina leaned toward her companion. "How is your better judgment feeling to-day, cousin Eunice?" she asked softly.

CHAPTER VI

BY LAND AND SEA

But one morning Bully pulled Edwina's hair for the last time. It was discriminating of him to recognize that nothing better for the purposes of nest-building than that light, fluffy substance could be procured, and every day it had been his custom to tug at it.

The two Americans said good-by to Miss McDonald and went reluctantly down the hill, and again from a boat's deck beheld Oban on its curving green slope. The town which had looked so unfriendly to their approaching vision now seemed to smile a kindly adieu.

"I never saw such a girl as you are for going away from places," said Miss Pritchard regretfully.

"Oh, we 're sampling, this time," returned Edwina. "If," with a sigh, "if Miss McDonald would only have let me take Bully!"

"Yes, I think a cage added to our traps would complete our happiness, especially with a bird who would demand a bath daily at three o'clock P. M. and raise the neighborhood if he did n't get it. After all," added Eunice reminiscently, "that regular 5.45 A. M. bell on the excursion boat is one thing we can be glad to get away from."

Edwina laughed. “Poor little bell-pursued Eunice!”

“Yes, if Europe knew how to be still nights, it would be greatly improved. Where are we going to sleep (or wake) to-night?”

“At Banavie. It will be fine to be so close to Ben Nevis; and there won't be any bells there.”

“Then there 'll be roosters,” said Miss Pritchard with placid resignation.

They sailed past Dunolly Castle, through the Firth of Lorne, and into Loch Linnhe with its green and heathery shores. Leaving the boat at Fort William, they drove to Banavie, through the town, and then over a moor where were marshes overgrown with rushes and waxy white bell-flowers edging long stretches of upturned peat. Ben Nevis loomed above them. They sat in the garden of the Lochiel Arms and watched the crimson flush of sunset deepen for minutes on the gigantic mountain slopes. It was a sight that stirred the soul.

“Let 's not see it fade — let 's not!” exclaimed Edwina when the color was glowing. She seized her cousin's hand and rose from the garden seat, lowering her eyes to hold the vision intact. Miss Pritchard followed obediently.

“I don't care now, even if there are roosters,” she said in a hushed tone.

As usual for this favored pair, the following morning was cloudless when they took the steamer on the Caledonian canal. This, differing from the river-like Crinan, seems a ribbon on which are strung charming lochs — wide and glassy sheets that hold their pure lucid mirrors up to the face of Highland Nature with an effect of doubling her beauty in a manner quite indescribable. Sometimes the twin pictures are of ruined castles, sometimes of farms looking tiny upon the fair, spacious hillsides. Sometimes a village nestles in a hollow, one of them that of which the old Scotchman said:

"'T is dangerous to linger in Drumnadrochit. One is near to forgetting that we live in a miserable vale of tears!"

Eunice and Edwina did not go north of Inverness. They spent a Sunday there, wondering at the richly garbed Highland gentlemen in their kilts, and rambling by the river Ness where the gulls were swimming and flying in flocks.

Their next stop was at Edinburgh, where they spent ten days — mostly with Mary Stuart at Holyrood and the Castle. At the latter place they enjoyed seeing the drill of regiments in white jackets and tartans on the lofty parade-ground. The swinging kilts and huge helmets of fur and feathers of the Scotch soldiery then assailed their risibles more than their hearts; but when the events of the following winter made tragic havoc in those brave ranks, it was with a thrill and a pang that two Americans remembered the parade under smiling skies of the heroic Gordon Highlanders.

Edwina secured a quaint Scotch coachman for their drive around Arthur's Seat, and as they climbed Edinburgh's guardian mountain, he called their attention to the bonny fields below. He showed them St. Margaret's Well, from which water was always taken to baptize Scotland's royal babies, and farther up the steep, Dunsappie Loch, a miniature lake under Muschat Cairn, where he told them in detail how the fairy folk skipped down from the Cairn at night to bathe.

"How Bully would enjoy that!" said Edwina, wistfully regarding the little wavelets.

"Not unless the fairies would bathe at three P. M.," suggested Miss Pritchard.

"Oh, he would n't permit them to go in when he did. Would n't he pounce on them, though, and tear them wing from wing! I don't think I ever met a more certain disposition than Bully's."

The sun went on shining, and Miss Bellair's riddle concerning her gracious Queen lost its point. Whether standing on Dean's bridge with Leith Water running beneath, brown and clear, weaving with its hilly wooded banks an interval of poetry into a crowded city's prose, or visiting that other bridge, the masterpiece that spans the Forth, all rambles and drives were made under bright skies. Only one day did the "haar" interfere with a view, and when at last Eunice and Edwina took the train for York, they were assured by native sages that Scotia seldom had smiled, and seldom would again, with such protracted graciousness as that in which these guests had basked.

"Three weeks in Scotland, and only half an hour's rain," said Edwina when they were settled in the comfortable corridor car that was to take them back to England. The scenery from its windows formed a series of tantalizing views. Especially did the gorge of Killiecrankie, with its rushing river and myriad trees, trouble Edwina's soul with longings. "Oh, cousin Eunice," she groaned, "the next wedding trip you take, do engage a better courier than I am. Look at the places we 're letting get away!" The speaker glanced up desperately at their hold-all and dress-suit cases in the rack — lumpish obstacles to quick movement, — as if but for them she could seize her companion and jump off the train.

Miss Pritchard understood her look and smiled. "Let 's come here sometime when we are disembodied and don't need to look about for porters."

"Agreed. Don't you forget, now, that you have a date with me. I know just what a little flibbertygibbet shade you 'll be."

"'Sh!" exclaimed Eunice, blushing and glancing around to see if any one had heard. "Ned Wilder, you 're irreverent!"

"To whom?"

A stop at York, a short stay in London, a day at Canterbury, and Eunice and Edwina at last came to Dover. The day was breezy and clear, and the dreaded channel rough. Miss Pritchard's heart sank within her as her eyes fell on the waiting boat. It seemed to her like a mettlesome steed, leaping and champing at the bit, eager to be off.

"Now, you 're not going to have an uncomfortable minute," said Edwina firmly, though inwardly she quaked. "You 've attended to that too recently." She led her cousin up the gang-plank and toward a vacant deck chair.

"Well, this is lucky!" exclaimed a pleasant deep voice, as some one approached behind them.

"Mr. Champion," exclaimed Eunice in return, too desperate for conventional greeting, "how can you speak of luck here?" She clutched the chair with both hands, and had none to give him.

"Are you worrying over this trip? Oh, it 's only a step, and you 're not going to mind it on this boat. If it were one of the small ones, I admit" —

The speaker swiftly arranged the chair with a deep slant, placed Miss Pritchard in it, and set the dress-suit cases where her feet could rest on them. "You will rock in the cradle of the deep and not mind it in the least," he said with comforting heartiness. "Now we 're off. Just close your eyes and open them in a little while at Calais."

"Is n't water dreadful!" moaned Eunice feelingly.

"You 're going where they think so," said Champion. "How will Miss Pritchard take to the flowing bowl, Miss Wilder?"

Edwina smiled and shook her head. The wind was fresh, and blew the spray in their faces as the Pas de Calais steamed on.

Champion took a chair beside the girl near the rail. "Did you get a letter from me?" he asked.

"Yes, I did."

"I have n't received any from you."

"I know. You see, we have been moving about so since it came" —

"You have forced me to think of you as lost in some dusty road on the way to Windsor. I had n't much faith in that little wagon."

"Thank you," said Edwina, with what she felt was a stupidly formal manner. "We did very well. I hope your visit to the cathedrals has been satisfactory."

"You 're very kind. Entirely so. Was n't it odd we should have chanced on the same boat for this crossing?"

"I believe that is what is always happening in Europe, is n't it? Americans can't avoid each other."

"Would you like to avoid me for the next hour?" inquired Champion good-naturedly. "I hope there is no danger of the steward's company being more acceptable than mine." For already ominous-looking little bowls were being carried hither and thither past Miss Pritchard, who had obediently closed her eyes, every feature of her face expressing endurance.

Edwina received this implication unsmilingly. "It is rather unsatisfactory to shout at one another against this wind, don't you think so?"

"It is no opportunity for sweet nothings, that 's a fact."

After this the girl gave herself up to the music of the waves. Once her handkerchief nearly blew overboard, and Champion caught and restored it. Then he took a letter from his pocket and re-read it. Involuntarily Edwina's eye took note that it was in a woman's writing. In their shipboard acquaintance she had learned that Champion lived in New York; that he had studied at Harvard College and the *Ecole des Beaux Arts*, and that after a year's work at home he had won a money prize in an architectural competition which he was now expending in a return to the Old World.

When the boat neared the shore Edwina rose and laid her hand on her cousin's clenched one. "Look what a sailor you are!" she said, with a congratulatory note.

Miss Pritchard opened her eyes, at first fearfully, then with growing confidence. "Are we there?" eagerly.

"Yes, indeed."

"Was n't *anybody* sick?"

"Yes, a number of people."

"Good!" ejaculated Eunice, with such un-Christian fervor that both her companions laughed.

"Well, it *is* encouraging," she declared.

"How wonderful it is, Mr. Champion, that you are always at hand when we have to go through a hard place!" added Miss Pritchard. "This landing, I know, is going to be a bother — with the customs in a foreign language."

"Your cousin thinks it quite natural that we should meet," he replied, a twinkle in his eyes, "in fact, almost unavoidable."

"Yes, that 's just like Ned," said Eunice innocently. "She is always expecting pleasant things to happen."

At this Champion glanced at Edwina, who was preoccupied watching the surrounding shipping. "And have pleasant things happened right along as they should?" he asked, turning back to Miss Pritchard.

"Oh, yes. We 've had a good time. I thought perhaps we should see you when we were at York. We spoke of you, did n't we, Edwina?"

"Yes. I think cousin Eunice expected to find you had been sitting on the steps of the cathedral a month or so waiting for us."

"How did it impress you?"

"Oh, it is vast. Nothing we have ever seen prepared us for these great spaces."

"But that — that basement," said Miss Pritchard, "was the worst place I ever tried to creep around."

Champion smiled at this description of the hoary crypt. "Did n't that herringbone masonry of the Romans reward you for your exertions?"

"What did I care for that!" scornfully. "I like places where I can stand up and see where I 'm going."

"Cousin Eunice's room at York looked on a railroad switch," remarked Edwina. "She sat up with engines all night. Sometime she will forget those and remember more about the cathedral."

"Then we came back to London," said Miss

Pritchard, "and what do you suppose it was, there? Skylarks in cages outside the hotel windows. There 's no poetry about the poor little dears in their canvas-topped cages, shrieking close to one's ears at four o'clock in the morning."

"I dare say," returned Champion. "They were designed to perform in a very large opera-house; but I hope you stopped at Canterbury and gained a different idea of cathedral crypts."

"Yes, that was very fine. Edwina went wild over Canterbury."

Miss Wilder did not take the cue, though her cousin regarded her expectantly. She gazed still at the shipping. "Even at Canterbury the serpent entered in for poor cousin Eunice," she remarked. "The bolt of her door at the hotel was rusty, and she did n't dare slip it, and at nearly midnight a man walked in with a lighted candle, mistaking the room. Of course she slept no more. Let 's see, cousin Eunice, our list of *bêtes noires* grows; we now have to ask about bells, poultry, engines, larks, and men with bad memories for room-numbers."

"Here is France," said Champion, as the passengers began to press forward. "May you sleep well and prosper on its shores, Miss Pritchard."

Champion escorted the ladies through the customs and found a place with them on the crowded train for Paris. Arrived in that city, his help in the confusion of the Gare du Nord was not to be despised, even by Edwina, who, when he had finally placed them in a cab, thanked him with a sincere tone which made her again seem for the moment like the girl he had known on the ocean voyage.

As he turned away to his hotel her face was present in his thoughts. "I wonder what has gone wrong with Miss Wilder," he reflected. "Something in her trip has disappointed her, evidently. She 's not at all the same. They say they have enjoyed the summer, — and Miss Pritchard is certainly honest." He shrugged his shoulders. "I really can't see how I 'm accountable, but she seems to think I am."

Edwina had chosen a little hotel near the Tuileries which had been recommended to them. Its dark halls and smoky walls were compensated for by the charming and kindly manner of host and servants.

When ensconced in their rooms Miss Pritchard turned upon her companion with a severity she seldom employed. "Now explain yourself to me, Edwina Wilder," she said deliberately. "I am displeased that you have n't more self-control. Admitted that you don't like Mr. Champion; I thought I had succeeded better in bringing you up to be courteous to everybody. He 's the very kindest young man I ever saw. What should we have done without him?"

"Just what we did with him," returned Edwina, "except that you would have heard my French addressing *facteurs* and *cochers* and the people at the *douane* instead of his. You don't know what you missed."

"When he asked you on the train about our trip, you replied in monosyllables instead of telling him interesting things. I was sitting too far away to talk conveniently; but I longed to let him know we were n't both dumb and stupid."

"Dear little Eunice," ingratiatingly, "I was too busy trying to sit up straight. Did you ever see such uncomfortable seats, or ride in a train that switched around like that? When I play crack-the-whip I like to be acquainted with all the players. Did you notice the size of that Frenchwoman next me?"

"Don't change the subject. No telling when we shall see him again, since he is not staying in Paris. That lovely smile of his! What a comfort it is to see his head and shoulders looming up above those little cackling Frenchmen! What was being alone in London compared to being alone in Paris? Oh, did you ask if there were any bells?"

"Ask whom? Mr. Champion?"

"No, at the office. I'm afraid you don't know how, Ned, and what shall we do? You ought to have asked Mr. Champion how to say 'bells' and 'roosters.'"

Edwina nodded comfortingly. "I'm nearly certain there are no roosters taking the air on the Quai, or the Pont Royal. As for the bells, I'm shocked at your faithlessness. Come down to the office and listen to me ask if there are any *cloches près d'ici!*"

Eunice and Edwina spent happy months in Paris, wandering in the galleries, churches, and palaces; driving in the gay, clean streets and alluring parks, and riding up and down the Seine for hours watching the progress of the Fair buildings or the clear, bright sunsets. It was very warm during the first week of their stay, but the autumn weather crept on and held them charmed in the windless, cool atmosphere until their third month was half gone.

"If we are going to visit the chateaux," said Edwina one morning, "we shall have to start, or it will be too cold. I don't feel at all enthusiastic about it. I 'd quite as lief sit a few more hours with the Venus di Milo."

"Oh, we must," said Miss Pritchard. "Think what a point Mr. Champion made of it."

"We 're not architects; and did n't we go to Chartres to see the cathedral to please him?"

"Yes; and shall we ever forget the wonder of it as long as we live?"

So, as Edwina in her inmost heart feared lest a treat should escape them, they took the trip through Touraine, returning to Paris for one more night in the black little hotel to which they had become so attached, to arrange their luggage for a fresh start. The only coercion in the delightful irresponsibility of their trip was the desire Miss Pritchard had expressed of having for once in her life the pleasure of following the summer. The Riviera was a name to them only, and thither they had determined to go on a tour of discovery. Long consultations with Edwina's most loved and valued friend, "Blessed Baedeker," had decided them to stop first at Cannes, and thence flit along the coast of the Mediterranean, pausing wherever there seemed most attraction.

Once more they came down into the deserted dining-room of the hotel for breakfast. Their devoted waiter Antoine always wore a sad and disapproving smile at this hour as he ministered to them in his shirt-sleeves. How ladies so exceptionally *gentilles* could be guilty of an act so little *comme il faut* as to take their coffee in the dining-room instead of in bed was a grievous problem to Antoine; and Edwina always felt his reproach at their intrusion; but Miss Pritchard was unhappy unless she could air their rooms in New England fashion, at a proper hour.

One fact which Eunice could not master was that these people, hosts and servants, could not understand English. Edwina explained and reminded her in vain. As they passed out from the hotel this last morning, Miss Pritchard remarked to their smiling landlord that it was really cold weather. The polite man bowed with his head on one side, and rubbed his hands.

"He can't understand you, cousin Eunice. What 's the use of embarrassing him?" said Edwina, following her cousin into the cab.

"Why, I only said it was cold," returned Miss Pritchard. "I supposed he had *common sense*."

They nodded back regretfully to the smiling, bowing servants surrounding the doorway. Edwina's *pour boires* had been entirely satisfactory. Alas! so had been Paris — and they were leaving it!

CHAPTER VII

CANNES

It was now the last of November, and our travelers were glad of their furs. The landscape began to look wintry; steam gathered on the car windows. They broke their trip at Lyons, and after a restful night set forth again on their journey.

They had taken the precaution to eat a beefsteak at the hotel before starting. Not so a French gentleman of about fifty, who was in the carriage with them. At 11.30 he rose and took down from the rack an oblong basket, a *panier de repas*, and proceeded to enjoy a *déjeuner à la fourchette* with a deliberation and neatness which proved almost subversive of his companions' good manners. The successful discussion of a six-course lunch with three wines, in such narrow and unstable limits as the corner of a railway carriage, was a work of art which fascinated their observation in spite of their efforts to appear unconscious.

Edwina's tickets for this trip lay heavy on her mind. Beyond a certain point they required to be *visé*, and at Tarascon, where there was a stop, she left the train and tried to find the proper official. In vain. Nearly every one she addressed knew nothing of the matter, and the shining exception indifferently referred her to an office across the network of tracks upon which were standing other trains beside her own. She saw no way of crossing, so boarded her car again in despair.

"Oh, I guess it will be all right," said Miss Pritchard comfortingly. "They would n't make it so hard if it were really necessary."

"Yes, they would — in Europe," returned the girl, rosy and annoyed. "They are all Tartarins still, there at Tarascon. There was n't an ounce of brains among the whole lot of officials on that platform."

The train was now under way again. The man who had eaten the elaborate lunch gazed at Edwina through his spectacles. He saw that she was regarding her tickets, and at last he leaned forward and asked her trouble.

She explained as well as she was able, in halting French.

He took the tickets, examined them, and then looked back at her with prominent, accusing eyes. Why had she not arranged the matter at Tarascon? She had had plenty of time. "*Ces billets ne sont pas valable. Comprenez-vous? Ils ne sont pas valable.*"

His manner and spectacles were so fierce, and he was so stout and dignified, that Edwina replied meekly that she supposed the tickets were valueless, but that she had not been able to find the *chef de gare.*

One could always find the *chef de gare.* He wore a white cap, responded the stranger; and he was so emphatic and voluble, and apparently outraged, that Edwina wanted to smile amid her perplexity.

Miss Pritchard merely gathered that her child was being scolded. "What is the matter, Ned?" she asked in tribulation.

"Nothing, except that we 've lost some money. I 'd like to get hold of Cook. These tickets are good for nothing the way they are now."

The other persons in the carriage regarded the Americans curiously; but the trouble was evidently none of their business. The stout gentleman relapsed into stolid, expressionless silence. He seemed to forget that he still held Edwina's tickets in his well-kept hands, and the girl had n't the courage to ask for them.

Miss Pritchard eyed them hungrily. "Do you suppose he understands English?" she murmured.

"No, I 'm pretty sure he does n't."

"Well, I hope you 're not going to let him keep those tickets, Edwina. He may not know everything, and you can explain things, I 'm sure, to the conductor — whoever it is. I don't suppose they 'd have anything so straightforward as a conductor."

"Well, we can't do anything while we 're flying along like this. Wait a little while. I don't dare to speak to him. I feel as if he had stood me in the corner for punishment."

At the next stop Edwina was surprised to see the portly personage rise and rush for the door. "You don't suppose that blessed man is going to try to help us at this little hamlet!" Edwina consulted the time-table. "We have only two minutes!"

"It would be too good of him!" said Miss Pritchard. "Oh, no! Men are all too selfish — and then a Frenchman!"

"I know it. I 've always said that every one of them was possessed of an evil spirit — but his taking the tickets with him — would n't that be nice! I dread to have some old railroad man chatter at me and not be able to understand him. This man speaks so beautifully. Oh, he 'll miss the train, cousin Eunice!" added the girl, much perturbed, as the time was nearly up. "What shall we do?"

Indeed, the guard was about to shut the door when the tall stranger appeared in haste, and, breathing heavily, climbed back into the carriage. "I think it will be well," he said briefly to Edwina, and explained that he had left the tickets with an official on the train, who had promised to make them right.

The girl summoned her most grateful French for the occasion, and the stranger accepted it with a short, unsmiling bow. It required his entire attention for several minutes to recover his breath.

"The poor dear!" murmured Edwina contritely, as he sat there puffing, with averted eyes. "Are n't we fortunate! At last we have seen politeness from a Frenchman who did n't want to sell us something. Don't you know, cousin Eunice, how we have wondered at the beauty of Paris when we never could see a man who seemed capable of conceiving, much less designing, its buildings and gardens? This man is a discovery for us. I hope we have n't been the death of him."

The day's ride had been an interesting one. Their kind friend had pointed out the Pope's château at Avignon and the old fortification about the city. They had seen olive groves, and women gathering the fruit; had skirted seventy-five miles of plain where the only protection from that persistent wind called the mistral is an interminable row of cypresses set close together to break its force. Stiff, useful barrier, Eunice and Edwina considered them, little realizing what poetry would cling about a cypress-tree ere their continental trip was finished.

Before darkness fell, the stout gentleman raised his hat to them in farewell, and they were left through his exertions to pursue their journey in peace of mind. They leaned back in opposite corners of the carriage and looked idly at the feeble light in the roof, or closed their eyes. Edwina's thoughts reverted to the cold nights at Tour while they had been taking the châteaux trip. How impossible it had been to heat their bedrooms with the open fires. How their breath had congealed upon the atmosphere. It was cold now. Many times during the day it had been necessary to wipe the steam from the car windows in order to see out. All trees but the olive and cypress had been bare.

She glanced up, drawing her golf cape over her lap. All at once she grasped Miss Pritchard with a suddenness that made the latter start. "Cousin Eunice! The Mediterranean!" she said.

"You don't say so!" ejaculated the other, sitting up and looking out on the wide sheet of water illumined in patches by the moon.

Grassy headlands jutted from the shore, and large rocks met and broke the gentle waves, as the train glided swiftly along.

"Did you suppose we ever really should see it?" asked the girl.

"I don't know as I did, though I must say it 's a good while since we left Paris."

"Paris! America, I 'm thinking of, and my geography."

They were both gazing upon the scene eagerly.

"I must say it puts me in mind of the coast of Maine," remarked Miss Pritchard.

"Perish the thought! You ought to be thinking of Napoleon and how he set sail for Elba."

It was half past ten when they reached Cannes. Everything was so quiet about the station that Edwina could scarcely believe it was the right place, and when she was convinced, there seemed not a porter to be had. In vain she called, and ran up and down the platform, and at last a fellow-traveler took pity upon her and lifted their heavy hand-luggage out upon the platform. Then followed the effort to rescue their steamer trunks from the van. There was no official to take any interest in their problem or to gladden their ears with a word of English; but a man was slowly and indifferently pulling over the trunks, and Edwina, by dint of smiles and personal supervision, succeeded at last in getting theirs.

"If Mr. Champion were only here!" groaned Miss Pritchard. "This is the queerest place we 've ever been in, Edwina, and it 's midnight, and there 's nobody around." For the train pulled out, and the dim station was nearly deserted.

Edwina smiled gayly. "It is n't midnight. This is only a taste of southern indolence. There are some hotel men coming across the tracks now." She yielded their belongings to the first one who presented himself, and in a few minutes the tired travelers were seated in solitary state in an omnibus, driving through the darkened streets of the French town.

"It 's just like a dream!" suggested Edwina.

"Not so good as the one I 'm going to have before another hour, — unless there are bells and every other noise combined."

"It 's like a city of the dead so far," returned the girl. "I never saw such a quiet place."

"Just supposing it should be real quiet and nice!" said Miss Pritchard, so wistfully that Edwina patted her hand.

"If it is n't, we 'll move on. You 're going to have a quiet winter somewhere, dear little Eunice. We 'll muffle all the bells and eat all the roosters, if necessary."

The first warning they had of proximity to their hotel was a sudden burst of light from somewhere. They now observed that they had approached a large dark building whose steps and vestibule had gleamed electrically at the arrival of the omnibus. Host and servants came forward hospitably, and before long Eunice and Edwina were again by themselves in a couple of communicating rooms.

"Is n't it odd to find wicker furniture?" asked Edwina, looking around at the pretty airy chairs and divans. "Lace canopies over the beds, too! Well, it would be a brave mosquito who would venture out in such a day as we have had."

The thoughts of both reverted to the clouds and cold they had left in Paris; the dingy furniture in their bedroom at the hotel, and the procession of baskets of wood which had been their defense against the elements during the brief time since the cold set in. A bell striking eleven sounded so distant that Miss Pritchard said good-night most cheerfully, and in a short time both travelers were asleep.

The locked shutters of Edwina's windows looked very white and clean to her waking eyes the following morning. The rims of light along their interstices showed that it was bright day. As she lay there wondering if Miss Pritchard were awake, all at once she heard a strange sound. It was the cooing of a wild dove. She lay in the bower of blue and white which made the hotel room so strangely airy and pleasant, and listened to the bird's note with surprise. A strong curiosity assailed her to see what sort of country could inspire birds to sing at this season.

Moving to the window, she quietly unfastened and opened the shutters, and the startling surprise of the view brought the color to her face. A magic wand seemed to have been waved over the earth. Frosty, withered fields had vanished. Instead of gaunt and leafless skeletons, tall palms spread their fans abroad. Orange and lemon trees full of fruit filled the gardens. Roses climbed a tall mimosa and hung luxuriant blossoms amid the delicate foliage high in air. Close by stretched the sparkling sea; the Esterel Mountains, losing themselves in a blue haze, were on the right.

Miss Pritchard's door flew open. "Did you ever!" ejaculated the two overjoyed pilgrims in the same breath.

"Why, it's Paradise, and I can't possibly understand finding it so near!" said Eunice. "A lump came right up in my throat when I first looked out the window. Does n't the trunk of that palm-tree look just like a giant pineapple? And I'm certain the foliage spreads nearly thirty feet. I'm going to find somebody who talks English, for I'm sure you would n't be willing to ask all the questions that are in my head!"

For two weeks the problem had been how to keep warm. Now with startling suddenness it was again midsummer. Eunice and Edwina walked in a happy dream about the hotel grounds and along the palm-lined avenue that ran beside the seashore, bordered by villas and hotels of varied architecture, each set in its semi-tropical garden of mimosa, orange, lemon, palm, and eucalyptus trees, and always with riotous roses climbing to audacious heights or hanging pendent from a terrace in such profusion as to suggest impossible stage settings.

Warm, tired, and happy, they returned to the hotel to luncheon. There were several small tables in the dining-room, and their neighbors at one of these were a stout, silent woman, and a gaunt old man whose black beard and scanty locks were fast whitening, and whose haggard, discontented eyes looked out from a network of quarrelsome wrinkles. The corners of his unsmiling, thin lips were down-drawn, and he regarded Eunice and Edwina with cold curiosity. They had already met at breakfast, so the newcomers now bowed to their English cousins with a word of greeting as they took their seats.

"You are Americans," remarked the man.

"We can't deny it," said Edwina cheerily.

"I need hear an American say only one word to know her nationality, and that word is Paris. You said it this morning."

"I suppose so," returned Edwina. "Our *r* is so different from the pretty English *r*."

Her pleasant speech galvanized the stout lady into an utterance.

"It is, is n't it?" she said.

"What do you think of Cannes?" pursued the old gentleman in his harsh, tired voice.

"It is the prettiest place we have ever seen."

"Ow!"

After this comment he ate in silence for half a minute, then: "Have you visited England?"

"Yes, but its beauty is so different."

"It is, is n't it?" said the stout lady.

"Ow!" said her companion.

"We did n't think to take parasols this morning," remarked Miss Pritchard, "and really the sun was very hot."

"Dangerous — very," declared the Englishman. "It will give you a congestion without fail;" then, noticing that rays were striking his shoulder at the present moment, he summoned a waiter to draw the shade. "The sun here shining on the back of the neck often gives one typhoid fever, or else drives one mad," he announced oracularly.

"It does, does n't it, and it 's very tiresome," purred the stout lady, her soft voice falling like oil on the other's harsh accents. "Me brother would never come here if it were n't for his tubes."

"Humph!" ejaculated her companion ungratefully. Then letting his cold glance rest on Edwina again, "I suppose you walked on the Croisette?"

"I suppose so — down by the water?"

"Too many people there. I never go. Try the

Boulevard Middy. Walk up through the alleys of plane-trees and around by the shipping, and you 'll come out on the Middy. It 's quiet there."

Edwina thanked him. Somehow she could not refrain from a feeling of compassion for the crusty old man, whose face looked as if happiness were a lost art; and she certainly pitied the stout, soft sister who was the companion of his sour search for health.

"Guard against the changes if you don't want to fall ill," he went on. "You will see when the sun goes down the contrast is very trying. The fires must be lighted at once."

"Then it is cool in the evening?" said the girl with interest. "That 's the reason, cousin Eunice, that we did n't suspect last night that we had reached Eden."

"The hour of sunset is worst of all," went on the Englishman in measured tones. "My sister is sometimes idiot enough to be shopping at sunset."

"Not very often, Edward, am I?"

"The Rue d'Antibes is a cold, damp death-trap at that hour. It 's well to remember it."

Eunice sent a solemn, inquiring look at the couple, but the lady was apparently unmoved by her brother's characterization. In fact, she construed Miss Pritchard's glance as an inquiry.

"The shops are very dear in Cannes," she said, "quite different to London."

Edwina wanted to say "Ow!" but she restrained herself. "We saw that they were very attractive.

My cousin, Miss Pritchard, is still misled when it comes to understanding the price of anything in francs. She is always saying to me, 'Oh! don't tell me how much it is in that stuff! Tell me in money.'"

"Ay," responded the Englishman, "twenty-five francs does n't sound much like a pound, does it?"

"Oh, pounds and shillings puzzle cousin Eunice quite as much."

"Ha, you meant 'dollars,' then," said the old man, with implied scorn. "You said 'money.'"

"What a cantankerous creature!" exclaimed Miss Pritchard when later she and Edwina were alone. "I would n't talk to him so much, Ned."

"Oh, I have to talk — I'm so happy!" returned the girl. "Poor man! The idea of coming to this garden of Eden and thinking about typhoid fever and insane asylums and congestion and death-traps! And he has to live with himself, and so does that poor, meek sister! They take themselves so seriously that we don't need to, that's one comfort. Now, cousin Eunice, what shall we do this afternoon?"

"Well, what do you want to do?" Eunice's brow had cleared. She gazed up at her tall companion with the usual loving admiration as they leaned on the railing of their balcony, looking on the tossing, bright water.

The girl made a gesture of mock despair. "There is such an embarrassment of riches, I don't know what to say. We might go to the Rue d'Antibes and commit some delightful extravagance in a shop, or go down to the Croisette and sit on one of those seats and watch the sea break on the islands, or we might take a drive back among the hills; but I think perhaps our letters will have come. We might go to the post-office and then hunt up Edward's favorite walk."

"Whose?"

"I don't know his other name yet, but sister called him Edward."

"Ned Wilder!" laughed Miss Pritchard reprovingly.

They found some letters awaiting them, and it seemed to Eunice that Edwina was altogether too pleased by this fact. Then they strolled to the Croisette, and turning to the right, passed beside the alleys of bare plane-trees and the harbor as they had been told; then around Mont Chevalier with its old, old houses and church, until the Boulevard du Midi was gained. Edwina drew a deep breath of pleasure. At their right on a steep height were placed white embowered villas and terraces, and on their left the sea rolled in in stately sweep over a broad, sandy beach.

"Edward's looks belie him," declared Edwina. "He certainly knows a good thing when he sees it."

"Ned Wilder, stop! You must n't be so impertinent."

"Keep your parasol up, little Eunice. I can't have those brains addled. I don't know how to ask for an insane asylum in French."

"But it is so cool and breezy here," protested Miss Pritchard.

"It's fine! Here is a seat. I'll hold the parasol and read my letters to you. Why, here's one from Mr. Glenn! I did n't see that."

"I did," responded Miss Pritchard dryly. "I noticed it immediately; and it does seem to me in very poor taste for him to keep on writing this way and taking your time."

"It is so valuable, is n't it?" laughed Edwina. "I call it very nice of him to go on sending me letters when I return such poor and rare replies. I call him a friend worth having."

Eunice's jealous sense made much of the fact that the girl opened this letter first. Had Edwina saved it until the last, it would have conveyed quite as objectionable an impression. Then, too, she scanned the contents in silence instead of reading them aloud, as she had proposed doing.

Miss Pritchard looked unseeingly at the charming sky-line of the Esterel Mountains and the line of foam fringing their base. Was she never to be rid of Ralph Glenn? Must his persistence insure no break in a friendship which would be as dangerous upon their return as it had been on their departure?

"Ned," she said impulsively, as at last the girl dropped Glenn's letter and took up the next, "I should really be glad if you were to tell Mr. Glenn frankly that I prefer you not to correspond with men."

"Oh, cousin Eunice!" Edwina's clear skin flushed, and her eyes as they met her cousin's were full of surprise. "Don't you think that would sound awfully prim and — and silly?"

"It would n't have been considered so in my young days."

"You can hardly call such a one-sided affair a correspondence," said Edwina, recovering herself. "Here, I did n't offer you the letter simply because I did n't think it would interest you; it 's mostly about a new cotillon club. Read it, dear little Eunice, and fancy how comical it would be to respond to this sort of letter by an announcement that my cousin did n't wish me to correspond with men."

An irrepressible laugh broke the lines of the pursed lips with which Edwina finished her speech.

"Then don't respond at all."

"Oh, it would never do to ignore totally a man who sends one the sort of roses Mr. Glenn does! How," with a sigh, "how traveling in a foreign land does make one appreciate American men!"

Miss Pritchard's gentle eyes gazed into the roguish ones with such seriousness that Edwina took the hand that wore her father's ring. "You 're jealous of me, cousin!" she said accusingly.

"Why should n't I be?" sadly. "You have hosts of friends; I have nobody but you in all the world."

"Girlish exaggeration, little Eunice! You might have any friends you wanted. As it is, I can mention several: for instance, Miranda and — and Mr. Champion."

"Pooh!" said Miss Pritchard with an unwilling smile.

"You say pooh? Was it nothing for me the night we arrived in Cannes, to see you walking up and down the platform at the station invoking Mr. Champion in impassioned accents, at a time when you should have been reposefully, smilingly trusting me and my command of the French tongue?"

"French tongue! It was command of hands and feet we wanted — and no porters about and everybody half asleep and indifferent, and the train ready to go off with all our things in it."

"Well, we know now the sort of sunny, dreamy day those porters had all been having. If we had known then, we should not have been so surprised at their indolence. Now I must finish these letters; and just be sure, cousin Eunice," the bright voice grew gentler, "I care more for your little finger than I do for this whole lapful of people."

Miss Pritchard's brow cleared. "I don't know as it 's wicked for me to be glad of that, Ned. If I did n't really believe," her eyes grew doubtful, "that I cared more for your happiness than I do for my own, I should be ready to jump into this ocean."

"Of course you do, dear," said Edwina, opening an envelope.

"I'm just going to walk a little way up the street while you read," said Miss Pritchard. "That smooth walk and those gardens look so attractive."

So Edwina was left alone with the music of the surf foaming snow-white upon the broad sands, where a few children and their maids were playing, armed with pails and shovels. She could not tell how long she had been reading when a voice beside her spoke.

"This is remarkable!" The sudden presence and voice sent color all over her face.

"You here, Mr. Champion?" She placed her hand for a second in his outstretched one. "How does this happen?"

"It is cold in Brittany. May I sit down?"

"It is a public seat," returned Edwina, though her face was less ungracious than her words.

"Don't you think it is about time you forgave me?" asked the young man as he took the vacant place on the bench and regarded the rosy face intently.

"For what, pray?"

"I have n't the least idea."

"Nor have I. You are imaginative."

"No." A decided shake of the head. "I never was. Always have to have everything explained to me."

"How tiresome — 'tarsom,' as the English ladies say," returned Edwina suddenly and ostentatiously cheerful. "Have you been in Cannes before? Why did n't you tell us how lovely it was?"

"I've put my brains to the question by all the inquisitorial torture I could think of, and the only information they have given is meagre. Did you feel insulted by the ramshackle little wagon and the cockneys that I got for you at Ascot? There was n't anything else on wheels to be had."

"Surely you don't think me quite so foolish and ungrateful!" said the girl, crimson now. "Was n't it bad enough to delay you and incommode your whole party without being over-particular as to what you found for us?"

"It only kept them five minutes — what was that? Nobody minded," he answered in a puzzled, honest tone.

"It was a pity cousin Eunice was so unnecessarily nervous; but why rake up that episode? Did n't we thank you sufficiently?"

In the silence that followed Champion met her hard, bright eyes with several little thoughtful nods. "It was that, then. Otherwise, you could n't say what our British friends would call a nasty thing like that. Well, do you know, I really can't understand it at all. I only wish you'd be again as you were on the ship — and sometime, just to educate me, tell me what feature of that day you could lay up against me so long. Miss Pritchard was n't unnecessarily nervous. The situation was quite as awkward as she thought it. I will tell you now, and then you will see that you have n't thanked me enough, that I bribed that driver heavily to take you both and go. He was waiting for two passengers, both men; so under the circumstances I could n't have any compunctions."

"How much did you give him?" asked Edwina, breathing faster.

"Thank you!" returned her companion, removing his hat with ironical deference. His eyes contained sparks now, but fortunately Miss Pritchard saw him; and being short-sighted and thinking the salute was intended for her, she hastened her advancing steps.

"I did n't know who else it could be," she said in pleased surprise, while Champion sprang to his feet. "When I saw a gentleman sitting with my little girl I just said to myself how nice it would be" — Miss Pritchard threw more cordiality into her tone as Edwina's expression impressed itself on her consciousness.

"I never knew her to take such a dislike to a human being," was her appalled mental parenthesis as she hastened to attempt to offset her child's manner by a continuation of welcome.

CHAPTER VIII

REMINISCENCES

Champion gave the newcomer the place he had vacated, and himself took a seat on a log close by.

"How well you are looking, Miss Pritchard. I need n't ask if you have been enjoying yourself. How did you like Paris? Of course you went out to Versailles?"

"Yes, we did, and walked miles through that palace, with the paintings and the glitter, and then over the Grand Trianon, the man that explains things chattering all the time. Edwina could n't understand it all, could you, dear?"

There was an almost imploring note in Miss Pritchard's question, and as she turned to her companion she observed with relief that the hostile look in her face had faded.

"Not nearly all," replied the girl, bringing her gaze back from the blue-green waves and facing Champion. "The guide evidently noticed the vacuity of my countenance, for he made several confidential asides in my direction about Queen Victoria. I could get along with French very well if they 'd let me do all the talking and give me time."

"Yes, they always thought we were English," said Miss Pritchard. "In the shops, clerks used to smile and tell me things cost — for instance, three francs tuppence ha'penny — as if those things were n't much worse than francs!"

"Poor cousin Eunice!" Edwina smiled reminiscently. After a moment she continued: "There was a clock at the Grand Trianon that we would have accepted if they had pressed it upon us. It was a bunch of gold flowers."

"How pretty it was," sighed Miss Pritchard. "What a beautiful place it is altogether; such fine trees, and woods just like the country!"

"Of course you went over Marie Antoinette's playhouse?" suggested Champion.

"Oh, the little Trianon," responded Eunice with enthusiasm. "We did n't want to come away from that pretty village at all. We looked in through the dairy window at the marble slab where the queen made butter, and walked around among all the cottages and saw the moss growing on their thatched roofs, and we sat on the bridge and watched the gold-fish and carp in the winding river, and the sun came through the foliage of those great trees. Do you remember, Ned, how transparent the leaves looked?"

"Yes, it was enchanting that afternoon; but how tired we were! We asked a man the purpose of one of the prettiest cottages, and he said it was the boudoir of la reine where she reposed herself in a wrapper of percale when fatigued! We would have accepted any sort of wrappers if we could have reposed ourselves anywhere; but we were n't invited."

"So we rode back to Paris on top of the tram. Think of me," said Miss Pritchard laughing, "climbing to the top of trams and omnibuses!"

"Was it against your better judgment?" inquired Champion.

She shook her head at his smiling face. "Of course it was until" —

"Until she found how much better she could view these strange people," explained Edwina.

"Yes, people who live on the sidewalk instead of in houses," said Miss Pritchard.

"Wait till you get to Italy to see people live on the sidewalk," remarked Champion. "How do you like the Exposition buildings? I stopped and saw them just before coming down here."

"Oh, we had many a good time riding up and down the river watching the buildings go on. Is n't it wonderful to have such a pretty river in a city? When it winds under those gray arches and you get out to where the banks are green and hilly and they have such beautiful sunsets — why, it 's grand. How much more European cities manage to keep the beauty of the country than any of ours do at home!"

Edwina watched her cousin's animation wonderingly. Could this little woman, chatting volubly to one of the opposite sex, be the same who in Boston endured the presence of the most agreeable masculine acquaintance only with suspicion and repressed aversion? The change was due in part to the blossoming of Miss Pritchard's faculties in the freedom and novelty of the last six months' experiences; but it was also due, Edwina knew, to the fact that her little guardian felt the responsibility of keeping a cheerful atmosphere about the man whom she had taken into her favor for his kind services.

She sat in silence while Miss Pritchard descanted on the charms of St. Cloud as they had seen it one day when the fountains were playing. Eunice described the twelve terraces with their varied sculpture, the marble groups at the top thrown into relief by the dark greens of the surrounding forest, and how the water splashed down this broad staircase in noisy cascades, every one of the carved sea-creatures ornamenting the terraces sending a flood from its jaws, the whole emptying into an oblong basin studded with occasional jets, gracefully rising and falling. Edwina let her proceed, although she was aware how familiar a scene that must be to Miss Pritchard's listener.

"You tell very pretty stories. Go on," said Champion. He had made himself comfortable upon the sand, his back against the log.

"Oh, we could go on indefinitely, could n't we, Ned? We had a fine time at the two big gardens — the Acclimation one and the garden of plants. You know they both have animals."

"Cousin Eunice, Mr. Champion lived in Paris a long time," suggested Edwina.

"Don't mind her, Miss Pritchard, please."

"Oh, I always mind her," said Eunice quickly. "I 'm a properly brought-up American guardian."

Her cousin's suddenly dry tone caused the girl to look at her in doubt. Eunice occasionally had fits of spirit and decision even against her idol. Edwina saw that, having made a special and unusual effort, the worm had turned, and a speaking glance from her cousin warned her that she was now expected to take her turn.

"Yes, I think no two people ever enjoyed outdoor Paris more than we did," she remarked. "We lived close to the Tuileries, and often sat in the gardens on our way either to or from a visit to the Venus; the flowers, and tame sparrows, and always the people, were so entertaining. The great white poodles coming up snowy from their scrub in the river, with fresh blue ribbons, always amused us, and the small black and tans dressed in tailor-made blankets with storm collars and pockets with tiny handkerchiefs. We used to take books with us to the gardens and try to read, but there was always too much to see."

"Of course you formed the *pâtisserie* habit?"

"Naturally; and I see Cannes is not the place to break it."

Miss Pritchard's countenance had relaxed into such complacency that Edwina continued: "We thought Paris by gaslight quite as marvelous a spectacle as it is called. Do you remember, cousin Eunice, that Sunday afternoon when we took a cab by the hour in the Bois de Boulogne?"

"Yes, when the coachman coolly explained that the reason he drove so slowly was because otherwise the course would be too cheap!"

"Well," looking back at Champion, "afterward we sat in the Avenue Bois de Boulogne and watched the driving; then sauntered with the procession as far as the Arc de l'Etoile. By the time we found our 'bus and climbed to the roof, it was dark. What views we had that evening! Everything on wheels in Paris seemed to be out, and every carriage had two lamps. When we had nearly reached the Tuileries, the long uphill perspective of the Champs Elysées was alive with thousands of glowing lights surmounted by the grand arch. The fountains in the Place de la Concorde were ghostly white, and so were the statues in the Tuileries. We walked home through the gardens, and as we crossed the Pont Royal the Seine was shimmering with colored reflections. It was a picture to stay with one indefinitely."

Champion watched the speaker's vivacious face attentively; and when she had finished he addressed Eunice. "I fancy you have a very good courier, Miss Pritchard."

"Oh, she 's the best in the world!" was the earnest reply.

"You have n't told me about your trip through Touraine."

"We enjoyed it greatly, and were glad you urged us to go, were n't we, Ned?"

"Yes, except during the cold evenings at Tours."

"You made that headquarters?"

"Yes; we would take the train every morning and visit one of the châteaux and come back every evening."

"It was beautiful, bright, frosty weather, with clear sunshine, and always a moon to come home by," said Miss Pritchard; "but those hotel rooms were cold at night, — no mistake. We used to sit close to our open fire, but see our breath just the same."

"And I know just how the sheets felt," remarked Champion, — "as if they were made of celluloid and dipped in ice-water."

"Exactly," laughed Edwina;" but how many Millet pictures we saw those days as we drove among the dewy fields where the peasant women in short blue skirts were knitting and tending their cows and sheep! The valley of the Loire is certainly very beautiful. Before going to Tours we stopped at Blois to see that château. Do you remember, cousin Eunice, how the wide, winding river looked that night as we stood on the bridge with the sunset turning the water crimson on one side and the nearly full moon brightening on the other?"

"Indeed I do; and those tile floors at our hotel!"

"The only door to my room opened upon a court with the clearest starry sky for a roof."

Miss Pritchard laughed. "We clung to our hot-water bags those nights, and did n't think much about steam-heated, carpeted houses."

"What did you think of the Blois château?"

"Oh, of course we thought of Catherine de Medici all the time," replied Edwina. "It was a satisfaction to know she really died there."

"Dear me!" said Eunice, shaking her head. "I 've wondered so often since we 've been over here, how people could have been so wicked in such beautiful places. From Hampton Court on, I 've just been asking myself that question, and in the Château country more than ever."

"You drove out to Chambord before you left Blois?"

"Yes; that is where we saw so many Millet pictures among the fields and the farmhouses and little villages."

"You saw a different sort of French people from the Parisians."

"Yes, indeed; and attractive people they are. Even the little boys pulled off their caps to us as we drove by."

"Did you go on the roof at Chambord?"

"Oh, Mr. Champion, what a wilderness of spires and sculpture and turrets and towers that roof is!" said Eunice. "And to look off and think that for twenty square miles those forests and avenues and fields are all the grounds belonging to that solitary castle!"

"Did you see the room where Molière used to try his comedies on the dog?"

"Did they say anything about a dog, Ned?" asked Eunice simply. "Mind you, I never knew a word anybody was saying from the time we left Paris till we got back again. Nobody spoke one word of English."

"But cousin Eunice remembers the double spiral staircase," said Edwina, smiling at the water.

"Yes; did n't she send me down with that chattering guide while she went down right side of us, yet out of sight! I tell you I was glad to meet her again on terra firma."

"Did you go on to Amboise next?"

"No, we stopped first at Onzain," replied Edwina, "and took a carriage to the château of Chaumont."

"Oh, you wanted to see more of your friend Catherine de Medici."

"Yes, there in her bed-chamber was her prie-dieu — fancy her having a prie-dieu! — and close by was a fine chapel. We were shown into her astrologer's room. I should think she oftener worshiped there."

"That was a lovely place," said Miss Pritchard pensively. "The grounds are princely, and so high above the river. Such vines and flowers and trees — such luxuriant beauty! How could she have held one bad thought there? But did n't we have a funny lunch in — in the village when we got back, Ned? I never can pronounce any of those names."

"Yes, where the chickens had to be driven out from under the table across the stone floor of the dining-room. From there we went to Amboise."

"Oh, I remember," said Miss Pritchard. "That 's the one the poor owner can't see because he is exiled from France."

"And the one where Da Vinci died and is buried," suggested Champion.

"Oh, yes; a bust of him was in the garden. Think of that garden up in the air where it is."

"Yes," said Champion, "and the spiral inclined plane instead of a staircase, where the lords and ladies rode up to wander among the arbors and flowers."

Miss Pritchard sighed. "I 'd rather think about that than about those mammoth stone terraces with their openings for guns, and all those trap-doors that opened to drop rocks on enemies' heads."

"Oh, yes," responded Champion. "They had all the modern conveniences at Amboise. I believe that was where Queen Catherine had a massacre of a thousand odd people in sight of the court — a sort of dress rehearsal for St. Bartholomew's. Then you went on to Tours?" he asked, looking at Edwina.

"Yes. We stayed at Tours and went out from there to shiver over the dungeons at Loches, and marvel and rejoice over Langeais, Azay-le-rideau, and, best of all, Chenonceaux."

"You felt familiar with porcupines and salamanders and ropes before you finished?"

"Yes, and knew the portraits of a long line of

French royalty as well as we did our own family album."

"And was n't it wonderful how Edwina's French carried us through so successfully?" asked Miss Pritchard with naïve pride.

"Certainly," said Edwina quickly. "I was n't obliged to tell cousin Eunice when I wrote 'muffs' instead of 'cuffs' on the laundry list, nor when I asked the porter to set the dress-suit case on the ceiling instead of on the floor. Come, I think it is time for the first class in Chateaux to be dismissed."

"Oh — before you 've talked about Che — Che — where Mary Stuart spent her honeymoon with Francis Second!"

"Dear me!" said Edwina, smiling. "I knew Chenonceaux was wonderfully romantic, but I did n't know it could make you contemplate a honeymoon with rapture. Have you forgotten that Francis Second was a man?"

"But he died," explained Eunice simply.

Edwina laughed at this, and Champion smiled questioningly.

For a few days the young man was the companion of our travelers' excursions, and then they were again left to themselves in the warm golden light or the cold, cloudy breath of the Cannes winter. Sunshine predominated, and they never tired of wandering beside the tossing water with its curving shores adorned by terrace on terrace, rich in semi-tropical foliage and gleaming white villas, where the air was sweet with orange blossoms, or driving and climbing up the heights when all the land was aglow with the delicate golden glory of the mimosa-trees. They stood at the top of the Californie hill and looked afar on the surrounding country: Grasse, Mougins, Nice, Monte Carlo, Mentone, and the embracing semicircle of snow mountains and terraced hills. They visited these spots also; saw the wilderness of violets at Grasse which were to be crushed into perfume for my lady in many lands, or candied to tempt her palate. They strolled on the beach at Mentone, listened to the wash of the pebbles under the sweeping tide at Nice, and luxuriated in the beauty of Monte Carlo, — that spot where perhaps heaven and hell meet more nearly than in any other on earth. From the peacock water curling its dazzling snowy foam about gray cliffs, to the exotic gardens on its heights, every charm that nature can furnish and man direct seems lavished with utter prodigality on this siren of the southern sea.

The Riviera being the only locality on the Continent not visited during this winter by a daily cold douche, Eunice and Edwina felt themselves justified in continuing their lotus-eating existence instead of attending to the duties of sight-seeing, until other skies should cease to frown. They became quite familiar with the Remicks, their neighbors at the hotel table, and the Americans' uniform enjoyment of life continued to be a matter of some curiosity to the invalided man and his sister.

"You'd best be careful of the mistral," Mr. Remick curtly assured them one day when they had come in from a visit to Golf Juan.

"It seems to me people have too much fear of the mistral wind," replied Edwina. "What is harmful about it?"

"It's loaded with fine particles of sand, very irritating to the throat and lungs."

"But yours are delicate, Edward," remarked Miss Remick.

"So are everybody's," returned her brother, with the sudden fierceness he frequently evinced toward his willing slave. "Too delicate to take in pieces of rock at every breath. That's what it amounts to — rock."

"How vexing!" said Miss Remick, vaguely soothing. "Is n't it?" appealing to Eunice. "Cannes would really be very nice without the mistral, would n't it?"

"Perhaps we Americans are more used to wind," replied Eunice. "I noticed in England how little there was. It made the landscape fine to have everything so still and clear."

"It's beastly in England now," announced Mr. Remick. He seldom while speaking regarded his interlocutor, but oracularly addressed empty space.

"So vexing that one can't stay at home, is n't it?" purred his sister.

Edwina smiled brightly at her. "I should think you would welcome a good excuse for coming to Cannes."

"But we 've bean coming for several winters, you know," apologetically, "and it gets tiresome, does n't it?"

"You can go home to-morrow if you like," growled the invalid.

"I only meant tiresome for you, Edward. I like Cannes myself, don't you know."

"Well, so do I," shortly.

Eunice and Edwina were too accustomed now to these and similar amenities to be much disturbed. They had found that the ungracious speeches of her brother were as much a familiar part of Miss Remick's existence as her tightly curled fringe, her heavy gold bracelets, enormous brooches, and short skirts.

Edwina hastily raised her glass to her lips. She just now happened to notice for the first time the strange fitness of the cork in Mr. Remick's wine bottle. It was a bear rampant. He had said he liked Cannes. She recalled his figure as she often caught sight of it at a distance on the Croisette, seated on one of the palm-shaded benches under a white umbrella, his haggard eyes looking out over the rollicking waves breaking whitely on the islands of St. Honorat and St. Marguerite.

They four had taken the boat together one day for St. Honorat. The island is a gem, and the wide view over the water of snow mountains against deep blue, then the nearer hills with old picture-towns nestling against their green sides, is wonderful in its variety. There is a long thick avenue of cypresses on the island leading to the monastery where brown-gowned monks sell one their delicious cordial, and a forest of pine-trees growing with no underbrush from the clean sweet grass gives enchanting glimpses of the sea; but all these vistas had not moved Mr. Remick's stolidity by their enchantment, nor had the dangerously rough trip home been more effective. The waves plunged over the deck of their little steamer, which dove and clambered among the watery hills with such abandon that the passengers could scarcely keep their seats; but Mr. Remick only scowled at the running decks and gathered his feet into a dry spot, while his stout sister clung to the cabin in throes of illness, and when she could speak, gave it as her opinion that the Mediterranean was "really tiresome."

There had been during December a succession of dark days, when it often rained, and the rest of the time sulked. Cannes without the sunshine is scarcely better than less favored localities, and Mr. Remick, shivering in the damp cold that did not discourage the roses, waxed bitterly sarcastic when a sunless fortnight had passed.

"It 's going on like this all winter, I dare say," he declared one night at dinner, looking over Edwina's head. "But this is not real Cannes weather, you understand, I hope? Even though it 's like this three seasons out of four, they 'll tell you here that they can't understand it at all, — that real Cannes weather is superb, don't you know. When there comes a fine day they 'll all triumph and cry out that this is real Cannes weather. You don't see it very often, but when you do that 's the kind it is. It 's well to bear it in mind. Can you play the piano ? "

The addition being made in the same harsh tone that voiced his comments on the climate, Edwina hesitated a moment before admitting that she could.

" You 'd better come then and play on mine."

" Yes, yes," added Miss Remick appealingly. " It will make us forget how nasty it is outside, won't it ? "

Miss Pritchard after dinner told Edwina that she would write a letter while the music was going on.

" You will let me venture alone into Brer B'ar's den ? " exclaimed the girl.

" Oh, I think it will be safe, as our room is so near. I will leave the door open so I can hear any shrieks for help. I think you must have made an impression on Brer B'ar."

" I don't much mind his growls now, but his French will make me disgrace myself yet." When he called François this morning and told him Miss Remick would take her breakfast upstairs I was in almost as much misery as the poor waiter! Montez Madame café deez mineet n'est pas toud suite. Demane chocolate.' Why he wanted to explain to the poor fellow what she would take to-morrow, I don't know ; and did you hear him to-night ask for ' unn demmy bootle de vong ' ?"

"I 'm glad I don't know the difference," returned Eunice, smiling in sympathy with the girl's laughter. "You have n't told me what the joke was to-day when I spoke about the crematory and you touched my foot."

"Oh, did n't you understand? He thought you were talking about a dairy, and he broke in and said there was one right around the corner, and that they called them 'lattery' in France. And Miss Remick is just as bad. Did you hear her 'Mairsy infinimong'? She always says 'Mairsy,' and he says 'Marsy.' She consoled me the other day when I was regretting that we must travel in Italy without any knowledge of the language. She said she never had any trouble at the stations. She just turned up the tail of a French word, and they understood her perfectly. My! That gave me a reverence for the Italian intellect!"

"Go along, Ned. I 'm sure those people are waiting for you."

They were, and Edwina had a surprise in discovering that music developed the nearest approach to pleasure that she had ever seen in Mr. Remick's tired countenance.

Miss Pritchard, busy with a letter to her lawyer, heard the lively strains and the murmur of voices alternately; and before long was conscious of a knock at the Remicks' door as the servant carried in the coffee tray. Five minutes later out of the stillness she heard the old gentleman's voice raised in a stentorian accent of ferocity: —

"*She likes it weak!*"

Eunice laughed quietly. Her suspicions were verified shortly by the entrance of Edwina, red-faced from suppressed mirth, bearing a cup of coffee. As soon as the girl was able she spoke with cheerful loudness.

"Miss Remick is afraid this is n't strong enough for you, but Mr. Remick has fixed it the way he thinks you like it. They would be glad to have you join us." Then she fell into pantomime which caused Eunice to choke over her coffee and frown and shake her head. They shortly repaired together to the next room, where Mr. Remick was just setting down his cup.

"We 're going to sing 'God save the Queen,'" he announced.

"Dear me!" said Miss Pritchard. "I 'm afraid I shan't be much help. I don't know the words."

"Ow! I 'll give them out verse by verse," he replied, and suited the action to the word; his rasping voice rising with peculiar relish at

> "Confound their politics!
> Frustrate their knavish tricks!"

They sang, all four, to the best of their ability, and Edwina filled in discrepancies with a full and harmonious accompaniment.

"We thank you, Miss Wilder," said the host when at last the guests rose to go.

"Edward is so musical," murmured his sister.

"Humph!" grunted her brother in a tone that warned her.

"Did you try the Petty Parry for your errands?" asked Miss Remick hastily.

"Yes. We were much obliged to you for recommending it."

"It's not so dear as most of the shops, is it? — quite different to those in the Rue d'Antibes, really."

"We liked it very well; but poor cousin Eunice has n't much opinion of shopping in France. When she found that even at such a little shop as the Petit Paris she could n't get a paper of pins or a spool of thread, she was disgusted. She has found out at last that only at a Mercerie can she get those notions; so now when she wants hooks and eyes or anything of the sort she asks me with scorn: 'Is there a *Misery* anywhere around here?'"

"I should think they were miseries," said Eunice. "In one where we were yesterday they asked Edwina if we wanted one row of pins or two! They never thought of our taking the whole paper."

"Fancy!" said Miss Remick.

"And then cousin Eunice can't remember the difference between a metre and a litre, and she is always asking me to buy her a litre of ribbon or elastic."

"Only fancy!" said Miss Remick.

"That time in Paris, do you remember, cousin Eunice, when you went out alone to buy a cake of soap?" Edwina turned to Miss Remick. "I taught her to say *savon blanc*, and she succeeded in buying the soap; but when she came home she said she had seen the stupidest man in Paris; that the soap she wanted was marked sixty centimes, and that she had said sixty to the man, and he only looked perfectly blank. I explained that he did n't understand 'sixty,' but she could n't see the trouble at all, for she kept on explaining that there were the figures 6 0, just the same as they would have been at home, and why should that clerk not have understood when she said 'sixty'?"

From the expression of Miss Remick's face it was evident that the situation was one she would have to reflect upon, but she responded gravely: "Fancy!"

Mr. Remick said that it certainly must be a great inconvenience not to speak French, and Eunice admitted that it was.

"I shall learn it before I take my next wedding trip," she added demurely.

"Eh? Really!" said Mr. Remick.

After his guests had said good-night and departed he addressed his sister.

"My word! That was an extraordinary speech of Miss Pritchard's, eh? I never thought she was touched. Eh?"

"Not more than all Americans, Edward. I don't mind asking her what she meant, if you like."

"Ow! it does n't matter."

A few days after this Miss Remick requested Eunice and Edwina to write a couple of sentiments in her autograph album. The weather, after a brief relaxing into gracious golden summer, had again relapsed into a last fit of the sulks, its clouds being reflected in each line of Mr. Remick's face; and with the attempt to flatter his humor, Edwina wrote amid the flowery and chaste quotations of Miss Remick's other friends, the following lines:

When sullen clouds for weeks on end
    O'erhang the *Cote d'Azur*,
'T is then the old inhabitant
    Makes haste to reassure,
Though beating rain depress your soul,
    And mistral chill your spine,
Just keep firm hold upon one fact —
    The *real* Cannes weather 's fine!

What though a keen and nipping wind
    Makes noses rosy bright,
And fingers tingle in an air
    The sun 's forgotten quite?
Just stamp your feet and swing your arms,
    Be patient, don't repine,
You 'll get a sample some spring day,
    And *real Cannes weather 's fine!*

This effusion attained a success beyond its author's wildest expectations. Mr. Remick, when next he greeted Edwina, regarded her eye to eye, and a sardonic smile widened his thin lips.

"You 'll get a sahmple some spring day," he quoted. "Ha! My word! That 's about it."

"Dear me," said Eunice later, "you will be leading Brer B'ar with a blue ribbon yet."

"Don't be too sure of that. Yesterday he snubbed me well. I asked him if they spoke French in Ventimiglia. 'Why should they?' he demanded in his usual urbane accents. I meekly answered that being just over the line, I had had hopes of it — it would make passing through the customs so much easier. 'Humph!' he growled. 'You might as well expect them to speak Italian in Mentone for the same reason.' One thing is certain, cousin Eunice, you have met one man who is not a whited sepulchre. I suppose they are all like this inside?"

"They vary," returned Eunice.

"You 'll tell me when we meet one who has redeeming features, won't you? Since I notice that each time one of Mr. Glenn's letters comes, you behave as if he were a ravening wolf threatening your ewe-lamb, I despair of pleasing you."

Miss Pritchard's quick eyes searched the girl's baffling ones. "You can't believe one of them, Ned. You cannot, dear," she said earnestly.

"Oh, yes," answered Edwina, laughing. "You forget Mr. Remick. He never deceives anybody."

CHAPTER IX

THE CARNIVAL

EUNICE was greatly pleased with the Battle of Flowers which took place early in February on the Croisette. The carriages vied with each other in floral decorations. Every wheel was a wreath of dainty blossoms; ferns and flowers enameled the harness of the high-stepping horses and embowered the occupants of the vehicles who in gala array pelted with roses, violets, and chrysanthemums those who passed them in the gay procession or on the promenades. A beautifully blue sea murmured on the sands, the Esterels seemed to come nearer in their freedom from haze, the lively strains of a band added gayety to the scene.

"I suppose you have been looking at the pretty sight to-day, Miss Remick," said Eunice that evening when the four were at dinner.

The English lady's eyebrows were raised in a gentle suggestion of injury. "We 'd not a very good place to see," she replied. "Me brother 's not very keen for diversion, are you, Edward?"

Mr. Remick uttered a low, inarticulate growl. "Depends on what you call diversion. Men and women throwing flowers at each other's heads, and horses trampling them in the dirt, does n't appeal to me particularly."

"Ah, but the horses did n't have a chance very often. They did n't touch this," and Edwina indicated a large bunch of violets on her breast.

"Was that thrown you?" asked Miss Remick enviously.

"Yes. An officer in one of the carriages took off his hat with a flourish and sent this spinning at me."

"Humph! Beastly impertinent of him," commented Mr. Remick, "and I dare say you liked it."

"Indeed I did," laughed Edwina. "I had begun to long for some of the pretty things flying through the air."

"You 've one too," said Miss Remick, sombrely regarding a big chrysanthemum gleaming like preserved sunshine in the front of Miss Pritchard's black gown.

"Yes. This is Edwina's bounty."

"Booty, you mean. Cousin Eunice would n't jump up for them, so when they came aimed at us, of course I caught them all. I have more upstairs, Miss Remick, if you will accept them."

"It 's too bad," said Miss Pritchard afterward. "Nothing ever turns out right for that poor woman. I suppose we ought to take her around with us sometimes."

"I suppose so," agreed Edwina. "Just think what it would be to have Brer B'ar for one's sole companion, — and then to be so stout as to be uncomfortable! I noticed Miss Remick never went out if it rained, and I asked her yesterday why it was, and she said that she could n't abide goloshes and that after she got her stays on she could n't change her shoes; so she must n't risk wetting her feet."

"We ought not to laugh," said Eunice contritely.

"Why not? I'm sure they laugh at us, and they're quite welcome. We'll take her shopping with us to the 'Petty Parry' if she feels poor, or to the sweller shops when she feels rich. We'll be good to her."

There came an opportunity to test their charity a few weeks later when King Carnival's reign began. Indeed, poor Miss Remick threw out a hint.

"Are you going to buy seats in the Tribune to see the Carnival?" she asked. "I'm always very keen to see it, but me brother does n't care. It's a pity, is n't it? There's so little to do in Cannes."

Edwina sighed involuntarily over this difference in point of view. Only yesterday as she and Miss Pritchard had been sauntering through a grove of pines where the black-caps were pouring forth their heartfelt liquid melody, she had been speaking of the embarrassment of riches held out by this strip of flower-strewn country. However, what would it be without congenial companionship? She instantly repented of her momentary impatience as Mr. Remick turned upon his sister.

"If you 're dull, why don't you go to the cemetery?" he demanded.

"The cemetery! The cemetery 's quite different to the Carnival, is n't it, Edward?"

"It 's by far the prettiest place in Cannes, with one of the best views on the Riviera. Why don't you go there?"

"I 've bean once this season, Edward."

"Humph! I 've bean a dozen times, I dare say."

"But it 's all the way uphill, and you 're not so stout as I am, are you?"

"My word! You would n't be so stout if you 'd go there oftener."

"But the cemetery does n't cheer me as it does you, Edward. It makes me quite low; and then I 'm always quite blown by the time I get there. Even you," pacifically, must admit that the Carnival would seem more lively to most people."

Mr. Remick happened to catch Edwina's eye, and she thought he almost smiled.

"At any rate," said Miss Pritchard hastily, "I hope you will go with us to the Carnival, Miss Remick."

"Get seats in the Tribune up by the Allées," dictated Mr. Remick unexpectedly. "That is near the spot where the prizes are awarded, and most of the tom-foolery goes on."

"Very well, we will. Edwina shall get us three tickets to-morrow."

"You 'd better let me get them," said Mr. Remick. “You 'd probably get the back row instead of the front one, or make some other blunder. It takes a person familiar with the language to get along with these fellows.”

Miss Remick's broad face was wreathed in smiles. “How thoughtful of you, dear Edward!” she ejaculated. “I do hope the day will be fine.”

She was still full of anticipation when the morning of Mardi Gras arrived, and on the way to their reserved chairs in the covered stand she showed her two companions where to buy the bags of confetti with which each member of the restless, gay crowd of spectators was armed.

“Ah, but these seats are fine!” ejaculated Miss Remick with satisfaction, when they had found their places. “Nothing will escape us here.”

“And we shall escape nothing,” laughed Edwina, as a bunch of paper confetti stung her forehead, and she shook the tiny colored disks from her hair. “We 're shining marks here in these front seats.”

“Keep it ready in your hand, me dear, and let them have it again. Ah,” with a sigh, “what a pity me brother cares nothing for such gay scenes, is n't it? He can't abide a crowd, and I dare say while we 're so lively he is walking out to Le Cannet or up to the cemetery. I should have bean quite dull here by meself, I 'm sure.”

“We 're very glad to have you with us,” said Miss Pritchard. “How the crowd is thickening!”

"It 'll not be long now," said Miss Remick, with relish. "The procession went along the Croisette on Sunday, I hear, and there was great gayety. The French are not a God-fearing people. I see him, I see him, — 't is King Carnival!" Her voice was lost in the cheers that rang along the serried ranks on the roadside as the huge monarch of the day came in sight, gorgeous in green velvet and gold, and mounted on a colossal snail. His crowned head was level with the tops of the palms, and nodded smilingly upon his subjects, while his hand frequently rose and fell in recognition and blessing.

While the eyes of the trio were fixed upon him, and eagerly looking back at his grotesque following, a tall thin figure with broad-rimmed hat stepped into the vacant seat beside Edwina. Great was her surprise when she turned, to observe Mr. Remick standing beside her, regarding the motley show with dull eyes.

"I thought you would n't know enough to get any serpentines," he remarked in reply to the girl's exclamation, and he took from a paper bag a number of what looked like bolts of narrow ribbon. "You don't know how to use them, I dare say."

"I have n't an idea," replied Edwina.

A float was just passing labeled "*Le Monde*," and containing a native of every clime. Mr. Remick deftly seized the end of one of the paper rolls, and with a throw and a jerk made it describe a long, graceful arc and land on the shoulder of an

American Indian, who flourished his tomahawk and skipped with volatile gayety.

"How pretty!" said the girl appreciatively. "Do teach me how."

"Edward — why, Edward!" ejaculated Miss Remick with ponderous surprise, winking her eyes as if to dispel a vision. "You 're never here at the Carnival, Edward!"

"Why should n't I be? It 's a free country, I dare say."

"I 'm so glad — but oh, when somebody comes and claims that seat, it will be so tiresome, won't it? Can't you buy them off, Edward? It would be a pity when we 're all so comfortable, would n't it, — and one person alone — bless me!" Miss Remick's speech was suddenly muffled, and she jumped and began spitting out confetti. "I wish I 'd seen that wretch," she continued when she could speak, plunging her hand in her bag and preparing to revenge the next assault.

"See the paper dolls," cried Miss Pritchard, as an overgrown company marked "*Les enfants du carnival*" skipped into view.

Next appeared a pretty group of harlequins and columbines dancing along to their own music. A bicycle ridden upside down by a man whose hair trailed in the dust, peripatetic stoves, sausages and vegetables, many species of animals, and an innumerable variety of masks and dominoes enlivened the procession of floats, while a gigantic headless figure, lantern in hand, trudged along turning from side to side and bearing the placard, "*A la cherche de ma tête*," while the enormous head he sought hung bobbing on his back.

"What fools these mortals be!" said Mr. Remick; but he kept Edwina supplied with serpentines, and leaned over the rail to buy more confetti when hers was gone. She tried to make him throw some; but this he declined to do, brushing the stuff from his beard and coat collar when attacked, his expression of cold endurance unchanged.

The procession passed four times, and wilder and wilder grew the mirth. The pretty disks filled the sunlit air like spray from a fountain in the brisk pelting, and Edwina's hat and shoulders looked as if she had been caught in a rainbow storm. Her cheeks were red from her vigorous exertions, as she smiled up at Mr. Remick, when the last marcher had passed and the crowd of spectators began to flow through the streets.

"Would you believe anything so silly could be so much fun?" she asked.

"Ow — it 's fun, is it?" he said grimly. "It 's silly enough."

"Great fun, and I 'm so glad you decided to come and bring the serpentines. Did you see how well I could aim at last?"

"My word! You did."

Miss Remick was brushing herself. "I can't think, Edward, how it is that nobody claimed that seat," she said, as they started homeward. "Really most extraordinary, was n't it, Miss Pritchard?

Such a crowd, and every other seat taken, and just happening to be next ours. It was most fortunate, I must say."

Eunice admitted that the fact was extraordinary, and Mr. Remick's wooden countenance moved not a muscle.

"If only dear Edward would come with us this evening," whispered Miss Remick, as she and Eunice followed the others. "It is most amusing here in the Allées. They hang the trees with Japanese lanterns and have music and dancing, and the maskers talk to one, and they have fine fireworks, and end up with the burning of King Carnival. Oh, 't is a great bonfire he makes. It quite gives one a turn to see him, smiling through the flames with his hand upraised. When it drops and his head droops, it makes your flesh creep, — it does, indeed. Ah, I wish me brother would bring us. It 's so fine and warm, I 'm certain it would n't hurt his tubes."

"You might get Edwina to ask him," suggested Eunice. "He seems to take a kind interest in amusing her."

Miss Remick received this suggestion eagerly, and drawing Edwina aside before dinner, with many a wink and caution, she proposed her plan. The girl nodded.

"I want very much to go to-night," she answered.

"Me brother 's sure to refuse, if I ask him."

"Well, we 'll see," said Edwina vaguely.

At dinner, then, after waiting, with a wisdom beyond her years, until a couple of courses had replenished Mr. Remick's inner man, she spoke.

"How would you like to go to the Allées to-night to see the dancing, cousin Eunice?"

"Excuse me, dear, if you can. I did n't know how tired I was. I 'm dizzy with monsters and the French language and dodging confetti."

"Very well. Miss Remick would like to go. She said so. Mr. Remick," deferentially, "it would be quite proper for your sister to chaperone me, would n't it?"

"I should think you 'd had enough Carnival for one day."

"I have n't, and the sun will be safely set, so the air will be nice and dry, and it is so near, we can easily run home any minute we want to."

"Humph!"

"May we?" pursued Edwina, turning the full attraction of her eyes and smile on the haggard parchment face.

"I suppose no one can prevent you."

"Oh, yes, indeed. You can. Only I 'm so curious about it."

"Of course you are. You 're nothing but Eves, all of you. Forever curious about something."

"That is what makes us so interesting. We have something to talk about, you see."

"Talk about? Eh? My word! I should think so! That 's why I'd never tie myself by the leg to a woman."

Meanwhile the woman who was tied to him looked anxiously from Edwina to her brother. The girl was not in the least carrying out instructions. Miss Remick's face grew blank when her sister-conspirator nodded at her brightly.

"He 'll let us go, you see."

"I don't know that we can go quite alone, can we?" she said dejectedly.

"Oh, Mr. Remick knows best about that. Dear me, how tired I am of veal! Yes, I know it is very good; but I never can look a calf in the face again — we 've eaten such droves of them in the past six months."

"Old joke, Ned," said Miss Pritchard.

"Yes, antique; but old jokes are better than none under some circumstances. Talk, cousin Eunice. Keep up the reputation Mr. Remick gives our sex."

Between them they monopolized the conversation until dinner was over. Miss Remick continued to look doubtful and glum. She had an idea that the evening company would be roistering, and she was just about to thwart Edwina's well-laid plans by timidly urging her brother, when he addressed the girl in his usual disapproving manner.

"What time do you wish to set off on this wild-goose chase?"

"I should think in half an hour at latest," she replied sweetly. "Now, don't feel one bit obliged to come. We 'll promise not to dance with anybody!"

"I shall go if you 're determined on the foolishness!"

"Dear Edward, how kind of you, I 'm sure!" ejaculated his sister.

It was a balmy February evening, and no breeze swayed the gay lanterns above their heads as the three, leaving the darkened and deserted street leading from the hotel, entered the Allées of plane-trees and made their way through an ever-changing, ever-moving crowd of masks and dominoes. The battle of confetti continued with unabated vigor, and Miss Remick and Edwina, being without masks, were glad of their veils as partial protection. Mr. Remick walked between them, and except for the necessary motion of the legs, was as inanimate as a bronze. Before his face he held a large palm-leaf fan, and the side-view which Edwina obtained of his down-drawn lips and the long curved nose touching the fan indicated the endurance of the stoic amid the inconsequent folly around him. Whenever Edwina paused he did so with instant obedience, never regarding the wherefore, until she again offered to move on, when he walked blindly as before.

Miss Remick's tongue flew excitedly. "See that great ape, Miss Wilder! Whatever has he got on his head? Oh, I shall have a fit if he comes near me! Here comes a whole line of them skipping. Ah, Edward, we shall be run down!" and the stout lady pulled on her brother's arm in a panic.

"*Go on!*" he shouted into the fan, anchored in spite of himself by the dead weight. The rollicking maskers, being opposed by the trio, paused in their onslaught and began dancing up and down before Miss Remick, laughing and chanting over and over, "*La taille fine, là taille fine.*"

"What are they at now?" cried Miss Remick.

"Commenting on your slender shape, that 's all," returned her brother without lowering his fan. "They 'll give over in a minute."

Edwina laughed irrepressibly. "Everything goes at carnival time," she said, and in a minute the singers broke their circle and ran on, and Mr. Remick resumed his stolid march.

"Dear me, I wish I were masked," cried Edwina. She had been addressed a number of times in passing and had thrown back a word of greeting. "One feels at such a stupid disadvantage this way."

They were approaching a space cleared for dancing, and a handsomely dressed harlequin, whose turquoise blue and silver gleamed in the arc lights, ran lightly toward her, the confetti he threw breaking in gold, green, and purple upon her breast.

"*Si je n'avais qu'une rose, Mademoiselle! Vous me connaissez, n'est ce pas? Je vous ai vu souvent dans la rue d'Antibes.*"

"No, I think not."

"Ah, you prefare ze English. I spik it too. I do many faults, I know, but I make myself understand. You will perhaps honaire me wiz a dance?"

The band was playing a waltz. Mr. Remick stood immobile, with shaded face, remote from the turmoil within a few feet of him. He felt Edwina's hand twitch with surprise where it lay in his arm.

"No, I thank you. Oh, no," she said hastily.

"Then I mek a little promenade wiz you?" suggested the harlequin.

"*Allez-vous ong!*" roared Mr. Remick into his fan.

The harlequin laughed and his bells jingled. "Ah, ze mad gentleman he do not permeet. *Hélas, Mademoiselle! Au revoir!*" and with a light skip and a mischievous side-throw of confetti behind the shield of Edwina's escort, he vanished.

Mr. Remick brushed the paper from his eyes and whiskers with deliberate composure, spit out a few disks, and passively moved on. Edwina now expected some bitter comment and suggestion as to returning home; but none came. Indeed, her escort was as ready as before to stop at the slightest hint, to wait dumbly while his sister and her friend wondered, and laughed, and chattered.

When they finally found a good place to observe the fireworks and the conflagration of gigantic, benevolent King Carnival, Mr. Remick lowered his fan, crossed his arms in front of him, and waited. Edwina could not observe that he remarked the rockets and bombs. His countenance never changed. Only when the sheets of flame enveloped the crowned king, he regarded the smiling face drearily.

"Rather uncanny that," he said.

"Ugh! When the poor thing drops, it looks barbarous, does n't it?" responded his sister.

The three returned, two of them weary and happy, to the hotel, their clothing gay with confetti.

"I 'll play to you a lot for this, Mr. Remick," said Edwina gratefully, when they were parting in the corridor. "I appreciate your kindness, for I know how you have been bored."

"Don't mention it," monotonously. "I should have been quite as much bored in bed, I dare say."

The girl gave him a little mischievous nod. "I 'm learning to know you quite well. You can't deceive me any more."

"Eh? What?" Mr. Remick's thin lips parted, and he looked around at his sister to see if she had heard. "My word! A most extraordinary young person!" He looked back, but Edwina had disappeared.

CHAPTER X

ROME

The next morning the men with wagons and shovels came to bear off the heaps of confetti that piled the sides of the streets, and no other sign was left of yesterday's frolic save the ill-temper of its weary participants.

One pair of marchers in the carnival procession had remained in Miss Pritchard's mind. They consisted of a cardboard giant and a little girl of seven or eight years, the pair being labeled, "*Les extrêmes se touchent.*" The little child's face as she trudged past the stand for the fourth time showed that she was finding a carnival a serious affair, and Miss Pritchard hoped she was as lively to-day as when yesterday opened.

Spring was coming on, and though floral nature on the Riviera was taking as fresh a start as if it had reposed all winter under northern snows, our travelers knew they must not be lured to remain.

"I can't think whatever we shall do without you," said Miss Remick, when they announced the date of their departure.

"We shall likely meet again," said Mr. Remick, addressing space. "I dare say my sister will give me no peace unless she travels before we go home."

"I hope we may meet, then," returned Miss Pritchard kindly.

"There 's never any telling, is there ?" said Miss Remick wistfully.

The following day Edwina, coming suddenly into Miss Pritchard's room, was astonished to see the latter start and unquestionably conceal a letter upon which she had been engaged. The girl made no comment, however.

"I 've just received word from the Hamburg-American people," she announced. "Our passage is secured on the Patricia for August twenty-sixth. I 'm going to take my book and go out awhile. Do you want to come ?"

"I believe I won't, this afternoon, Ned." Miss Pritchard's delicate cheeks were pink with the color which still rose in them so easily. "We were out so long this morning, and" —

"Oh, no excuses are necessary," said Edwina airily.

"I was n't making excuses, my dear."

"Of course not — just explanations. Well, you won't be lonely if I go ?"

"Oh, don't think of me at all," earnestly. "Just go and stay as long as you like. When I finish my — when I get dressed, I mean — I 'll take my book out on the terrace until you come."

"All right ;" Edwina kissed her, smiling. "Give my love to Miranda, won't you, if you decide to write a letter."

"I think I shall write her this afternoon," said Miss Pritchard. "It will be a good chance while I 'm by myself."

"Ah, you 're glad to be rid of me! There, you 're looking guilty this minute, little Eunice. What are you meditating? I think I don't dare go unless I get Miss Remick to come and chaperone you."

"Go along, Ned Wilder, you tiresome child!"

"'Tarsome,' you mean. Good-by. Be good."

Edwina left the house and took her way to a hotel garden which always allured her. Passing in under its spreading pines and palms, she sauntered among roses, japonicas, and cacti toward a hillside down which poured a brooklet in tiny cascades. A lifelike Red Riding Hood stood on one of its banks, regarding the crafty wolf which paused opposite with uplifted paw and panting jaws.

At a little distance a fountain rose from a wide basin of gold-fish, near which a gnome with snowy beard sat patiently fishing as he smoked his comforting pipe. Edwina seated herself and looked up longingly for the birds which belonged in this home of her childhood's fairy tales. Alas! the French care only for thrushes, larks, and nightingales in order to eat them. Edwina always ignored the bird course at dinner. The thought of the songs hushed in those tiny throats brought a lump to her own. She opened her book; but it lay in her lap while she smiled at the gnome watching his line so assiduously.

"It may be Mr. Glenn," she mused. "She may be asking him to write to some other girl — only I know she is n't. That is why she asked me so particularly this morning just what day we should arrive in Rome."

She picked up her book with determination and tried to read. After a minute her fingers relaxed their hold and again it slowly fell back into her lap. "Now she can add when we are going home, and by what ship," she mused. Her lips grew grave; the novel was not resumed. Her clear eyes gazed at the lacy foliage of a mimosa as if it were whispering something to her. For long she sat there, finding "tongues in trees, books in the running brooks," and what she read therein held her unconscious of the flight of time.

She played that evening to Mr. Remick until a late hour. Poor old man! She half disliked parting from him.

When finally the last morning arrived and adieux were to be said, his dry, bony hand gave hers one galvanic shake. "You 'll let us hear from you, I dare say," he remarked to the omnibus into which the girl was about to mount.

"That they will, I 'm sure," said Miss Remick, who was looking tearfully at Eunice where she smiled a farewell from the window.

"Yes, we must meet again," said Edwina cheerily. The 'bus door slammed, the horses started. The Americans looked back at the stout lady, who touched her eyes with a handkerchief before waving it, and at the tall thin figure motionless beside her, his arms crossed before him. They waved, the road wound, and trees shut off the view.

"End of another chapter," said Miss Pritchard.

"And probably the most interesting."

"Not if we succeed in seeing the Pope," replied Eunice promptly.

"You 've spoken of that so often, lately, cousin Eunice. Of course I should like to see him, but I don't understand your craze on the subject."

"I don't know that I understand it myself. I only know that I would rather see him than any other sovereign in the world; and this being the Jubilee year, he will hold so many receptions, we may accomplish it."

Edwina shook her head. "Every one says we can't without influence. Why did n't you think of it before we left home? We might have secured some letters."

"As if I could think of anything before we left home! Did you — ahem! — did you happen to hear what Mr. Champion said about it?"

"No, I did n't."

The omnibus clattered several minutes before Eunice continued: "He said that he had some influential Catholic friends in Rome."

"Indeed. Why did n't you ask him for letters?"

"I did n't — he thought — he said — well, of course you know, we *might* meet him there — we 've had such amazing meetings."

They had now reached the station, once so alien, now so familiar, and Edwina did not need to reply. The much dreaded customs at Ventimile proved to be only tedious, and nothing of note except the beauty of the scenery marked this entrance into Italy.

The travelers stopped for two nights at Genoa and viewed the palaces, churches, and the marvelous Campo Santo with its massive marble colonnades, which Mr. Remick, as authority on cemeteries, had warned them not to miss.

The beautiful ride to Pisa had every charm of peacock sea, green terrace, and snowy Alp. The train played hide-and-seek with the bewitching scenery by means of many tunnels, whose frequency gave opportunity to a stout Italian woman in the carriage to take snuff. She was arrayed in a blue watteau wrapper and had a dark plaid handkerchief which she was always in the act of using as they emerged from tunnels, and which on reaching the light she hastily and surreptitiously tucked behind her. She constituted herself hostess to every one who entered the carriage, did many little kindnesses, talked volubly in French to Edwina, inquiring her plans and assuring her that she knew her hat came from Nice, and was altogether a most self-possessed and complacent personage. When they neared Pisa there occurred an astonishing transformation in this traveler. She donned a fawn-colored ulster over the wrapper, assumed a large hat with sweeping plumes, pulled light gloves over her fat hands, and in place of the vanished bandanna a snowy kerchief was in evidence. Eunice and Edwina exchanged a look. They could hardly believe in this handsome woman's identity.

At Pisa they spent a bell-ringing night by the thick, swift Arno, and in the morning drove out to where on a spacious, smooth, daisy-strewn lawn the tower and cathedral await the visitor. They climbed the slanting staircase of the one and wandered about among the church's treasures; but their greatest pleasure was in the baptistery, whose mysterious echo turns the isolated tones uttered by one man into a choir of angel voices.

It was very late that night when the travelers reached Rome, and the next day they repaired to a pension of Champion's recommending, situated near the Borghese Gardens. The sky looked as if it could never have been clouded. Their rooms had a balcony facing the Medici Garden on the Pincian Hill, and the landlady spoke French. Edwina's cup was full. Miss Pritchard, who had not been without fear that her courier would ignore Champion's choice of a pension, was wreathed in smiles.

"I do believe, Ned, it 's the quietest place we 've ever found. No village could have fewer bells than this part of Rome, anyway."

"And a village would be sure to have more roosters."

"Yes indeed! How fortunate we are, when tourists are already pouring in, to get a place for

Holy Week! It seems as if Mr. Champion must have written."

"Oh no," said Edwina coolly. "A great many people must have an English speaking place. This would n't fill up nearly so fast as the English pensions."

"Well, we 're here, anyway!" said Eunice triumphantly. "We 're in Rome!"

She had heard vague reports all her life that Italy was like heaven, and from her experiences in Genoa and Pisa had agreed that in one respect it certainly was, there being no night there; but here, in a quiet street facing "the hither brow of the Pincian Hill," with wide stretches of green knoll and valley and grand old trees for neighbors, she saw in pleasant anticipation a succession of still nights and dreamy mornings that filled her with gratitude.

"That young man always seems to know the right thing for us to do, Edwina. I will do him justice, whether you will or not."

They settled down then to enjoy the city of fountains and marbles. They rambled industriously through palaces and gardens and drove on the Pincio. Miss Pritchard was insatiate of the Vatican and St. Peter's. Somewhere near her was the Holy Father in whose personality she felt such overwhelming interest.

One bright morning Edwina suggested that they drive out to the Catacombs.

Eunice drew up her slender shoulders. "I 've always shuddered at the thought of them!" she said.

"But you would n't be satisfied not to see them."

"Perhaps not; but—let us wait awhile." A shade of embarrassment stole over the little woman's face as she met her child's eyes.

"What for? More sunshine? It won't penetrate there. Beside, this is a fine day. Is it more courage you 're waiting for?"

"N-no. Not exactly; but — but perhaps there will be somebody — be some one we shall be acquainted with, so we should n't have to go alone — as long as you can't speak Italian."

"Did n't you hear me yesterday with the driver? *Non batti il cavallo*, — no, *no*, NO!"

"Oh yes. How effective that would be to say to a guide in the Catacombs when we wanted to get out! And I 'm sure you don't know another word. It will be such a pokerish place, Ned. Do wait."

"For whom?" Edwina tried not to smile. "You look as if you had somebody in mind."

"I have somebody in mind," said Miss Pritchard deliberately, suddenly very dignified and very red. "I think Mr. Champion will be in Rome before long."

Edwina's countenance grew still graver.

"I could n't prevent his coming to Rome, I suppose," went on Eunice. "Jubilee year, when every one is coming for Easter, and when thousands of peasant pilgrims are coming from all over Italy in every sort of costume that of course he will want to sketch. I was thinking of it yesterday when we saw those strange ear-rings and head-dresses."

"Of course, so useful in his profession," murmured Edwina.

"Certainly; he is an artist, and — and he is very familiar with Rome: and, as I told you, he knows people and can help us perhaps — possibly he can, to see the Pope."

Edwina took her cousin's face between her hands. "It would be strange if Mr. Champion should happen to know when we came and where we are staying, would n't it?"

Eunice wriggled her warm cheeks free. "It might be," she said with dignity, "but it is n't, because I wrote to him. I told him when we were coming."

Edwina regarded her. "We have very good times alone, little Eunice."

"Where we know the language, we do; but a kind friend like Mr. Champion will certainly be a convenience here."

"You still are willing to make a convenience of him."

The girl's tone was quiet, and Miss Pritchard could not tell how much feeling might lie behind it. She vividly remembered Ascot.

"This is different," she said hastily. "I would make use of anybody to see Leo XIII. Since we came I've heard nothing but how hard it is even for Catholics to get an opportunity; and I'm so glad I know Mr. Champion. Do be pleasant about it, Edwina, and be nice to him if he comes."

Edwina moved to the window and looked toward the belvedere in the Medici Garden. "Of course I will," she answered.

Her passive manner contrasted strikingly with the satisfaction and interest she showed later the same morning in the reception of a letter from Ralph Glenn. "He grows cleverer and cleverer," she said, laughing over the closely written pages. "You must read this, cousin Eunice. It is very bright." And Miss Pritchard, charmed to have her child light-hearted, tried to show some pleasure in Mr. Glenn's witticisms.

CHAPTER XI

EDWINA'S PROMISE

It was one morning when Edwina was absent that Champion's card was brought to Miss Pritchard as she sat in her room repairing the braid on a skirt. Her first thought, as the servant handed it to her, was of this fortunate coincidence, and, well pleased with fortune, she looked in the glass for a last smoothing of her silky bands of gray hair before going to the salon.

Champion's broad back was toward her as he stood in a window, hat and stick in hand. He turned suddenly at her greeting.

"Good morning. Is it too early? I thought I would catch you before you could be gone for the day."

"Oh no, this is n't very early for us."

Eunice indicated a seat near her own, and they regarded one another for a moment with that cordiality which so easily springs up between Americans in a foreign land.

"When did you reach Rome?" she asked.

"Yesterday. You see, I have not wasted time."

"You always are just so kind!"

"I hope your confidence will not be misplaced in this instance. Rome is packed with people as desirous of seeing the Pope as you are, and the pilgrims are making such demands on his time and strength, it is more than ordinarily difficult. I have n't seen my friend, Monsignor Baccelli, yet, but I know he will oblige me if he can. The best chance will be to get into some large general reception to pilgrims at St. Peter's."

"Do you dislike to ask your friend?" asked Eunice timidly, with still greater thankfulness for her child's absence.

"Not in the least," returned Champion heartily.

"But you are not a Catholic?"

"No. Monsignor was a great friend of my father. He will be glad to oblige me if he can. People pay high prices for these tickets, of course."

Edwina seemed to loom tall and accusing before her guardian, who spoke as if the actual presence coerced her.

"Then we should pay too," she said hurriedly. "Edwina would never consent to any other arrangement."

Champion smiled into the crown of his hat, then up at his companion.

"Let us not be afraid of her. Let us run this our own way and keep our own counsel."

Eunice looked dubious. "She might ask me something. She will ask me," she said, lowering her voice. "No, if it is n't too expensive, I will buy tickets with pleasure."

Her companion laughed softly. "Leave it to me," he said presently. "It is very absurd to buy tickets for such a function. I think you won't have to. Is Miss Wilder well?"

"Always, I'm grateful to say. She is at the Forum this morning. She thought it would save me a good deal if she familiarized herself with it first."

"Quite right, too. The fine weather has set in, evidently."

"We have it everywhere. People ought to pay us for staying in places."

The young man regarded her beaming face quizzically. "I suppose your better judgment is a thing of the past."

Miss Pritchard stirred and smiled consciously. "Oh, it still acts as a rudder; but I'm sure now it was just the thing for us to come, even," with a sigh, "if we go back to the same life we left."

"You sigh. I'm sure you and Miss Wilder, quite alone in the world as you tell me, must have a cosy time of it."

"If we could be alone," said Eunice devoutly, "it is all I would ever ask; but then — I suppose it is unreasonable to expect it."

"Miss Wilder has been in school up to now, I thought?"

"Yes, but there are vacations," said Eunice dismally.

"And engagements will take place in vacations."

"What do you mean?" asked Miss Pritchard with startling sharpness.

Champion, looking up in surprise, observed that she was really pale.

"You don't know what you 're talking about if you think Edwina would ever allow anything like that unknown to me. She may have spoken to you about Mr. Glenn. Of course he writes a great deal, and all that; but there is nothing of the kind yet. You have misunderstood" —

"I never heard of Mr. Glenn," said Champion, hastily interrupting these disclosures, which he did not appear to find exhilarating. The opportunity had offered temptation to inquiry, but he had not intended to succeed so suddenly and so well. "I merely meant that there are many social engagements for a girl during vacations."

"Oh!" Miss Pritchard gave a little shake of the head and a smile as she recovered herself. "Indeed there are. So you see when we go home I know I shall have so much less of Edwina than I do over here that I rather dread it."

"Yet you are going August twenty-sixth."

"Did I tell you? So I did. I remember Edwina came in and told me just as I was in the midst of that letter to you."

"Why do you go so soon?"

"She thought the boats would be so much worse crowded a little later, on account of the return from the Paris Exposition."

"I should think you would have been tempted to stay over a year longer and let Miss Wilder spend a winter studying in Germany."

It did not impress Miss Pritchard as at all strange that this young man should speculate concerning the subject she found the most interesting in the world.

"Why did n't I think of that!" she said. "It is n't too late yet. We could give up our tickets, don't you think?"

"Certainly."

"I 'll suggest it to Edwina. It would be so good for her to learn German thoroughly. Of course," sighing again, "it would be hard for me being where I don't know the language. In Paris Edwina used to write out the words I wanted to remember, spelling them the way they were pronounced, so if she were away I could ask the maid for water or anything like that, or if I was outdoors, I could ask for a street. The trouble was, I used to get the papers mixed; and one day I wanted water and I rang for the maid and then read off my paper, 'Chonz-ele-zay.' The girl looked at me very stupidly, and I said it over plainer and plainer, and at last she went and called a cab. I know I should have all kinds of trouble in Germany."

Champion laughed and rose. "Well, be careful not to let Miss Wilder know it was my proposition, if you want her to think favorably of it."

Eunice colored. "Oh, Mr. Champion! I 'm sure" — she began, embarrassed, and never got any farther, for he said good-by, shaking hands with her heartily.

"You shall hear from me soon concerning his Holiness. I shall be delighted if it proves that I can be of service to you."

The little woman stood for a moment where he left her, biting her lip. "That provoking child!" she reflected. "I thought he could n't help seeing it, and yet he goes on taking such an interest and being so kind. I wish I had brought Edwina up as well as his mother did him!"

When the girl returned to lunch she found her guardian in a rather dignified mood. Eunice thought it best to adopt this air in relating that Champion had called, and describing his kind intentions. Edwina received the news with pleasant monosyllables and made no comment.

"I should think," said her guardian bridling, "you could at least say you were glad there was so good a prospect of our seeing the Pope."

"I want to see him very much. I 've caught the fever; but a good many people buy tickets."

"Very well," said Eunice composedly. "So shall we if it is necessary. Even if we wanted to buy them, we should n't know where to go or how to do it. It has to be by chance in some side way that we don't know anything about. We 're just as dependent on Mr. Champion as ever."

"I suspect we are," responded Edwina. She added after a minute, "You seem to have found at last some use for a man."

"They 're often very convenient," returned Eunice. She had begun to think again of Champion's suggestion. "I have a new idea, Ned," she added with a smiling upward glance. "Let 's not go home."

"Why, that 's an old idea," answered the girl. "You decided that on shipboard."

"Why should n't we give up our passage on the Patricia and spend next winter in Germany, and let you study?"

Edwina did not look elated. "Don't you think it would be nice to go home first?"

A cloud fell over her guardian's transparent face. "I thought you 'd be delighted, Ned."

"We shall have been gone nearly a year and a half as it is. I think you would be homesick during a long cold winter in Germany, cousin Eunice."

Miss Pritchard finished folding and putting away some work, her thoughts, as usual after taking alarm, rushing on to dire conclusions; then she came close to her tall child and taking both her hands, looked scrutinizingly up into her face.

"Ned," she began, "what makes you so anxious to go home? Tell me one thing, dear, has any man anything to do with it? I 'm not going to coerce you, or oppose you, or do anything to make you unhappy; but sometimes I fear that you may surprise me. I tell you now, I could n't stand it to be surprised. Let me into your heart, Ned, from the very first. If Mr. Glenn's letters have won your admiration so that you want to go back to see if he really comes up to the ideal you are forming of him, let me know it. You could n't have any pride with me, Ned, — my little girl ?"

The appeal in her voice would have touched a hard heart. Edwina's clear eyes were very soft as they looked unwaveringly into the upraised ones.

"Listen to me, cousin Eunice, for now I am going to tell you something important."

Miss Pritchard's whole person expressed attention.

"I will never marry any one until you ask me to," said the girl slowly.

Eunice gave a little involuntary start. "Then you 'll be an old maid all your life," was the quick reply.

Edwina nodded deliberately, without removing her eyes, and even to her loving guardian she had never looked so pretty.

"You could scarcely do better, Ned, — scarcely do better."

"For better or for worse, that is my determination," said Edwina.

"And not made unhappily, or under force ?"

"Made cheerfully and willingly. Does that close the subject to your satisfaction ?" smiling.

"Yes — but still you wish to go home."

"The last of August, yes." At last the girl colored richly.

Eunice dropped her hands contentedly. "It 's full as sensible, I dare say. It was Mr. Champion suggested your staying in Germany. I did n't say so at first, for fear of prejudicing you against the plan."

“Is he going to stay over?” asked Edwina quietly.

“I don't suppose so. He did n't say anything about his plans.”

The girl moved to the window and looked across the sweep of ilex groves, between the towers of the Villa Medici, to the far dome of St. Peter's. “This is the afternoon we can get into the Medici Garden,” she suggested after a minute. “Let us go.”

Miss Pritchard assented with the anticipatory relish which the last year had taught her.

They drove for awhile in the small circuit of the Pincio and then left its band and accumulating crowd for the long, hushed, green alleys of the old villa grounds with their population of broken-nosed, weather-beaten statues. Climbing the staircase to the upper garden, the mysterious green depths of the bosco came in view. They sat on the terrace listening to intoxicating bird-songs rendered by descendants of those who made melody for Lucullus at his feasts; and then entered the grove and climbed the mossy stone steps that lead to the belvedere.

“I declare, this is a satisfaction,” said Eunice when she had attained the covered pavilion which they saw daily, so near and yet so far from their window. “Don't you remember how I would n't believe this summer house did n't set on a smooth grassy hill — and here it was the tops of trees after all.”

She looked with interest at the ilex foliage slop-ing evenly away on all sides, close and homogeneous as turf, and appearing at a little distance to support the belvedere. The view of Rome and the Campagna was wide. The sun dipped lovingly toward St. Peter's when they came down again out of the treetops, and strolled through the moist, verdant alleys back into the street.

Down the Spanish steps and to the Corso they sauntered, being rewarded for this walk by seeing the king drive slowly by, the inevitable solemn black of his entire equipage making strange contrast to the vivid scarlet of the queen's liveries, which caused her carriage to be recognizable while far distant.

They drank his Majesty's health in chocolate at the Café Nazionale, and in the midst of a swallow Miss Pritchard set her cup down emphatically.

"How stupid of me!" she exclaimed.

"What?" asked Edwina.

"Oh — nothing of any consequence."

"Evidently."

"Nothing you would have any sympathy with, then."

"Now, cousin Eunice, that 's unkind."

Edwina smiled at the small cakes on her plate. Nothing amused her more than the rare occasions when Miss Pritchard endeavored to keep her own counsel.

"Ahem! It 's nothing, I tell you."

Edwina shook her head, assuming a look of resignation. "My rival again, I suppose."

"Now you don't think, dear, that I rely on him in anything where you could do as well?"

"How do I know?"

"I was only thinking of the Catacombs. It came over me all of a sudden that I forgot to speak about them; and I have n't an idea where Mr. Champion is staying."

"Do you mean to say, cousin Eunice — I don't understand you at all!"

"Why, what difference could it make to him? He is such a good-natured young man any way; and it is n't like asking him to do anything for us, or even go alone with us. People go through in parties, I understand, and all I ask for is to go in his party; then if I *should* faint or anything" —

"Cousin Eunice!"

"Well, I 've always had an idea I should faint."

"Then why go?"

"Edwina!" reproachfully. "Do you think I could miss it? Mr. Champion would n't mind carrying me, if worse came to worst, any more than he would his cane; and the very thought of an Italian guide having to pick me up, and sputtering the way they do! Well — what are you laughing at, Edwina? The only point I make is that I want to speak to him about it before he goes, because I could n't ask him to go twice."

"Oh, I don't know; perhaps you could."

"We might go back to Cook's and see if he 's registered there," went on Miss Pritchard, unobservant of this thrust.

"I would n't. You will hear from him soon about the Pope business. You may be sure he will never think of going near the Catacombs, — probably knows them by heart. More than that, he probably has hosts of friends here. Don't let us take him away from them again!"

"Edwina," with great dignity, "I beg you not to be morbid and foolish. Mr. Champion and I understand each other perfectly, and it 's — it 's" —

"None of my business? Pray don't spare my feelings," but the girl was laughing, and her eyes twinkling in the way Eunice liked best to see them, so she laughed too, and said to herself that each day of this delightful wedding trip of hers was happier than the last.

Miss Pritchard's grateful estimate of Howard Champion as a disinterestedly kind and attentive friend went several degrees higher when on the following evening his card was brought to her as she and Edwina sat by their lamp, the one studying Baedeker and the other writing a letter.

"Now you 're coming into the salon, Ned," said Eunice, in the tone of one who expects a contest.

"Why?" The girl looked up, dipping her pen.

"Because it would be uncivil not to."

"He has only come on business."

"Your business as much as mine. Don't you intend to see the Pope? That letter to Mr. Glenn," with suppressed impatience, "will keep."

"It is n't to Mr. Glenn."

"Well. At any rate, I insist upon your coming to" —

"To see that good, kind young man," finished Edwina. "When you insist, little Eunice, I obey, and I always shall."

"Well, I 'm glad," said Miss Pritchard, with a sigh of relief. "And do behave as you do with those silly, uninteresting creatures at home. Act as if you had a little life, and don't leave everything to me."

"But you understand each other so perfectly," murmured Edwina, the corners of her mouth twitching as she glanced in the mirror.

Eunice appeared not to trust her, for she seized her arm and walked her down the corridor to the salon at a smart pace, — a proceeding which caused Edwina to greet Champion with unwonted smiles.

"Well, you both look as if sight-seeing continued to agree with you," he remarked.

Eunice heaved a sigh as she took a seat. "It shows what good condition we 're in. The guide books all complain of how modern Rome has injured picturesque Rome hopelessly any way, so I don't see why they can't go one step further and save us thousands of steps. If they 'd let me gather into one great palace the masterpieces scattered all over this city, tourists would build a monument to me as high as the one we would like to build to Baedeker. As it is, you have to travel miles to see three statues by Michelangelo, and just so with the paintings. This villa and that palace may be two squares apart, but not both open the same day."

"However, we 're not complaining," said Edwina.

"Certainly not," said Miss Pritchard, "with magnolias and japonicas in their glory everywhere, and the birds in the Borghese Gardens waking me up every morning."

"I fancy no works of art give you pleasure equal to those of nature, even in Rome," said Champion.

"I don't know," returned Eunice. "I 've had feelings here I never knew before. When I looked at that Dying Gladiator and seemed to realize the excitement it must have been to find him, and how long that creamy old marble had lain underground before it was resurrected, and the way great men have studied and reverenced him and a lot more of them, it 's very thrilling. Edwina has a book full of quotations from authorities, and we read what they say of a statue or picture, and then I try to see in them what they saw."

"And she does n't always succeed," said Edwina. "At the Doria gallery this morning, I read her Ruskin's sarcastic description of Claude Lorraine's 'Mill.' Cousin Eunice studied the pastoral scene while she listened, and then said: 'I don't care; that lady in the foreground is real pretty, and it must have been lots of trouble to paint it.'"

Champion smiled. "I 'm sure Claude's ghost should have felt grateful for such gentle consolation. Let me see: is n't that the collection where the great portrait is of Innocent X.?"

"Yes. I believe he was guilt personified, was n't he?"

"I think so. At any rate, he looks the part."

"I really am tired of Romulus and Remus," said Miss Pritchard. "Marble, plaster, chocolate, sugar, — they 're made of everything."

"I fancy that live wolf in a cage on the Capitoline Hill agrees with you. I 'm certain he wishes his ancestor had not been so hospitable," said Champion.

"Of course, there have to be some things you don't care for everywhere," said Eunice, after waiting a moment to see if Edwina were intending to speak, and finding that she had no thought of it. "The Capuchin Cemetery, for instance, gave me the shudders with its robed mummies and bony decorations; and oh, Mr. Champion," with lively interest, "speaking of cemeteries, have you been to the Catacombs, yet?"

"Not this time."

"Are you going?"

"I had n't thought." He glanced over at Edwina, whose eyes met his. The passive manner with which she customarily favored him had returned. He well knew it was not her natural one.

"Why do you ask, Miss Pritchard?" returning to the alert little woman.

"Why, you see, — we felt — we feel a little nervous about the Catacombs."

"Pardon me," said Edwina. "I think it would be fair for you to explain that that is the editorial 'we.'"

Eunice would not look in her direction for fear of disheartenment. "We thought — that is, I thought if you were naturally going, we would" — she paused.

"We would naturally go the same day," finished Edwina, smiling. "Cousin Eunice is planning to faint in the Catacombs, Mr. Champion. It is only honest to tell you."

"At your service," he responded, with a sweeping bow toward Miss Pritchard. "Command me."

"Edwina thinks I command you a great deal."

"Why not, if we both like it?" was the prompt response.

"There!" ejaculated Eunice naïvely, turning upon her child.

Edwina shrugged her pretty shoulder and twisted a ring.

"When shall we go? To-morrow? I am the idlest person in Rome."

"Yes, to-morrow. Let 's have it over. Don't you say so, Ned?"

Edwina agreed sedately.

"And your friend, Mr. Champion — the priest."

"Yes, I 've seen Monsignor. It is too late for him to get seats for you at St. Peter's for Easter,

— I was hoping to accomplish that. As to the Pope" —

Miss Pritchard's eager eyes dilated.

"He is going to try."

The visitor soon took his leave, one hostess giving his hand a cordial pressure and the other pleasantly civil.

"How kind he is!" exclaimed Eunice. "Do you think, Edwina Wilder, one man in a thousand would take so much pains to please an old woman like me?"

"They ought to if they would n't," said Edwina, embracing her, the expression of Champion's eyes at parting still in her mind. "He has better taste than the average."

"Oh, you will admit that?"

Edwina turned away and smiled an instant at the shutters before closing them. "Certainly," she answered. "It's not for me to question his taste."

CHAPTER XII

THE CATACOMBS

THE three drove the next day out the Appian Way. Champion sat with his back to the horses and answered Miss Pritchard's questions to her entire satisfaction. Edwina, in silent but contented mood, looked over the sunny Campagna. Whenever her eyes returned they were sure to meet Champion's, puzzled and inquiring as they had been last evening when he said good-night. Often he too lapsed into a brown study, from which Miss Pritchard's earnest queries roused him.

They stopped to enter the little Quo Vadis church, where is preserved in marble a copy of the print of the Saviour's feet when he appeared on this spot to the fleeing Peter and turned him back to duty. Eunice's Puritan blood was stirred as she retreated from the garrulous old woman to whom Champion gave some coins.

"The blind and awful superstition of this place!" she ejaculated. "Let 's get on to the spot where once at least real Christians did worship."

When they arrived at the Catacombs a young monk, who was selling the usual souvenirs at an out-of-door counter, came forward with a greeting.

A few other tourists were waiting, and the monk signified that he was now ready to conduct the party. He was a slender, wiry, alert young man, and the spirit of gayety twinkling in his eyes and lurking in the corners of his thin lips seemed out of accord with his shaved crown and rope-bound gown.

"There, I'm sure you would n't have minded having him carry you," murmured Edwina to her cousin. "He looks as if he would enjoy marching off with you pick-a-back."

"Don't joke right now, Ned," returned Miss Pritchard with a sort of awful gentleness. The realization of what she was about to do suddenly seemed overwhelming in its nearness.

Meanwhile Champion was talking to the monk, who responded briskly while he lighted the torches. He answered in the affirmative when asked if he would give his explanations in French, and began so volubly in the latter language that Champion smiled and asked him if he could speak German as well.

The monk made a dissenting grimace. "Ah no; that gives me a sore throat," he said in French, with a shrug.

He gave a torch to each of the party.

"Mr. Champion," said Miss Pritchard confidentially, with an assumption of lightness, "it 's sort of silly in me to go down, after all. I can't understand anything he says, you know, and it 's very bright and pleasant on this hill. I think

I 'll just sit here and wait; and you and Ned can tell me" —

Her torch was as wavering as her voice, and the young man clasped her free hand in his and drew her gently after the others, who were descending a long flight of steps into the earth.

"Come right along," he said kindly. "We 're going to have a good time."

"Really, I don't know what I 've been thinking of; it 's wholly against my better judgment. Dear me! what an idiot" — But here the door to the external world clanked behind them, and only pitch darkness was before.

Eunice clung to Champion's fingers with a desperate grip. "Would you mind not letting go of me at all?" she gasped.

"Get him to open the door again!" said Edwina imperatively. "I won't have cousin Eunice go if she does n't want to!"

"She does want to," said Champion mildly. "I should have to come back with her to-morrow if she does n't go now."

"Oh, you 're so good!" said Eunice, with a half-sob born of the war between the spirit and the flesh.

"Of course I am. How could I be anything else here where the saints have trod? Be careful not to drop your torch, Miss Pritchard, and you will be all right. We have to go single file now. Miss Wilder will come behind you, and here is my hand when you want it."

"Be as brave as the early Christians, dear," said Edwina, seeing that they were in for it.

"Perhaps this would n't seem so bad to me," quavered Eunice, "if I knew that lions were waiting for me if I went upstairs."

They moved on through the narrow, tortuous corridor. Champion at once began telling her what the guide was saying, and in a short time they came out into a square chapel where there were glass-covered caskets containing skeletons. One had hair flowing down to its bony shoulders. The guide, who had been chattering with an uninterrupted flow of spirits, waved his torch about to exhibit the shelf-like graves in the walls, then let the light rest upon this grinning face. Catching Edwina's eye, he glanced down at the ancient skeleton and shook his head with a deep sigh over the dusty tresses.

"*Ah, la jeunesse! la vanité!*" he said pensively, his merry eyes twinkling.

Edwina and Champion brought a smile to Eunice's face by translating and enlarging upon the irrepressible monk's comments. Miss Pritchard's color came back, and by following close upon the young man's heels she took the next winding corridor with rising courage, in spite of the fact that the path was full of humps and hollows over which one must stumble blindly, torches merely disclosing the wall of graves on right and left.

The guide was not always flippant. He indicated the fish and other ancient symbols rudely graven in the rock, and referred dramatically to those faithful ones whom persecution and martyrdom could not force to waver.

In the chapel of St. Cecilia Miss Pritchard quite forgot her tremors, even forgot Edwina and Champion, and these two were left on the outskirts of the little group who were throwing their torchlights on the recumbent statue of the martyr in her pathetic attitude of abandon.

"How dreadfully natural she looks, with her poor little hands clasped and her hair thrown forward and hiding her face!" said Edwina.

Champion looked not at the statue, but at the speaker. "You seem to think of late that all naturalness is dreadful," he returned.

The girl looked up at him quickly. "What do you mean?"

"You know well enough. I thought we had buried the hatchet in the sands at Cannes. Is this Roman one brand new, or did you dig up the other after I left?"

"Hush! I must hear what he is saying." For the musical voice of the young monk was rising and falling with his theme. Miss Pritchard, finding herself near a man who understood and explained to his wife, was absorbed in listening and in gazing at the slender, girlish white form.

"You need n't," returned Champion, "because I 'll take you to see the original of the statue. That is n't it; but there 's another martyr in the

Catacombs I 'd like to have you take some interest in. Here I am" — for Edwina's glance was sweeping the walls.

"Oh — well — you don't understand" — added the girl hurriedly.

"Precisely what I complain of. I have n't seen you alone a minute since that afternoon on the beach at Cannes; and as I despair of ever doing so above ground, there 's no time like the present."

Edwina instinctively moved her torch till her face was in shadow. Champion as promptly threw his light upon it. There was a frown and a smile there.

"If you only knew cousin Eunice — It is so hard to explain."

"Try, — just try. What has she to do with it?"

"She 's the best woman in the world, you know, but she 's a little bit — jealous" — Edwina hesitated.

"Of Mr. Glenn. Yes, I know. So am I."

"Has she told you that?" The torch revealed a sudden smile. "Well, I 've learned — don't you see, I 've learned" —

"Well, what?"

"Wisdom. She does n't like men at all, anyway."

"Come now, Miss Wilder! I flatter myself she has a soft spot for me."

"But there 's only one reason for that."

"Oh, I 'm not so vain as to suppose there are more. I 'm not even sure what that one is."

"Simple enough. She likes you because she believes I do not."

Champion made earnest use of his torch.

"And you — what? Then is that" —

"Ned! Mr. Champion! Where have you gone?" For they had fallen back insensibly.

"Right here, cousin Eunice," said Edwina, hastening to meet her.

"For a second I did n't know but you were *lost!*" ejaculated Miss Pritchard in frantic accents, seizing her.

"No, no," said Champion, "only we are so tall we could easily see over the heads of the others; so we stood back a little."

"Don't you do it again!" said Eunice.

"Certainly not, certainly not," responded the young man with such alacrity that Edwina need say nothing.

"I don't altogether understand," he said to her very low.

"Then you 're a bit stupid," she answered, still lower; but he caught the words and the fleeting, ravishing smile that accompanied them.

They moved on in the small procession; but what were the hills and hollows, the paintings, the scrawls, the musty air, and the legends of this historic labyrinth of death to those whose life was just beginning to blossom?

The fun-loving monk chattered away, undeterred by the gruesome surroundings. Once he held his torch toward pencilings on the wall where certain inane tourists had written their names.

"*Inscriptions modernes*," he explained.

A number of the party were laughing at his comments by the time the door was reached leading again to the upper world. He flung it open and revealed a long flight of steps and the blessed light of day.

"It is something of a penitence to climb them any way," said the merry soul. "You are all good people. I will not make you climb them on your knees." They laughed again. It was easy to laugh, freed from the long constraint of burrowing like moles through the narrow, earthy corridors. The young monk flushed as his eyes met Edwina's happy ones.

"I bad man," he said in English with a deprecating air, "but good — very good," he added earnestly.

"How do you know your way about under there?" asked the girl in French, preceiving that they had emerged at a point remote from their entering-place.

"Do you know Boston?" he answered simply.

He had reason to be a jolly young monk when he looked at the fee one of the Americans had bestowed on him. Champion would have delved much deeper into Mother Earth to have found the gold mine he had discovered in Cecilia's tomb. Before their ship had sighted England he had known that if she were to be won, Edwina Wilder was the woman he should marry, and each meeting with her since had but heightened this determination.

His thoughts had been busy during the last portion of their pilgrimage. If, as she implied, she had taken the trouble to act, it seemed to indicate an interest in himself not compatible with disturbing rumors concerning the invisible Glenn who had haunted two long nights. In the revulsion of feeling, the sunshine, and the long drive home, there was an undercurrent of excitement in Champion's volubility which caused Eunice to regard him with doubtful and surprised scrutiny.

"Did you notice anything queer about Mr. Champion coming home?" she asked Edwina after they had bade him good-by.

"I never heard him talk so well," replied the girl coolly.

"I don't know." Miss Pritchard looked thoughtful as she took off her bonnet. "I don't like to suspect such a thing of him, but he acted so different coming home from what he did going, I could n't help thinking he might possibly have taken something — well, something *intoxicating*, down there in the dark!"

Edwina bowed her head over an obstinate glove-button.

"He might have felt queer or faint, you know," went on Eunice. "I don't think even a big, strong man need be ashamed of getting such feelings in such a place. It is n't exactly being scared, — you can't call it that."

"I won't," returned Edwina demurely. "Whatever the sensation was, I 'm sure if Mr. Champion had it, it was a highly honorable one, and very much to his credit; and if he used a pocket flask it was only what any man of spirit ought to have done under the circumstances" —

"Ned Wilder, you don't think he did!"

"No, it's you who think he did."

"But did n't you notice the change in him? Come now — without joking."

"Yes; a change decidedly for the better. I should recommend him the same tonic daily."

"How *uncharitable* we are to say such things!" exclaimed Eunice suddenly. "As if a man's mood could n't alter without — but really it was a new mood; he laughed so easily, and any thought of fictitious happiness is so painful!"

"It certainly is," responded Edwina.

She had some fear lest Champion might now take up his abiding-place at their pension, it being his customary home in Rome; but he did not. It was a favorite with Germans, of whom there were many in the house, the large-boned, robust-voiced women making the Americans feel physically feeble and insignificant. Occasionally these Germans spoke some English.

There were not lacking the Americans whose favorite subject of conversation in a foreign land is the superior merit of their home institutions. A man from Chicago sat opposite Edwina at table, and his neighbor was a charming white-haired German baroness who made courteous and great effort to follow his speech and to respond properly.

One day he was enlarging upon the attractions of his native city, and naturally became voluble upon so seductive a topic. As a culmination of the conveniences and advantages which he had been celebrating, he explained in detail the system of street numbering employed in the city by the lake.

His neighbor had listened with the closest attention, and when he at last came to a triumphant pause and looked into her eyes with a challenge, she waited a moment and then responded sympathetically, in most polite but broken English: —

"It must be very annoying to live in Chicago!"

The American hesitated, gasped — and decided to go on with his dinner.

Holy Week had come, and Miss Pritchard, to whom every tomb in St. Peter's had become as familiar as the revered black bronze of the saint, and the ninety-five golden lamps ever burning about his resting place, now made nearly daily pilgrimages thither. Hope sprang eternal in her breast that the Pope might unexpectedly honor one of these services with his presence. Notices and rumors of his receptions tantalized her.

On Holy Thursday Eunice and Edwina took their camp-stools in the cab with them right after lunch and visited an old villa garden until it was time for service. Eunice temporarily forgot the Pope in admiration of box and laurel hedges as high as her head, and two yards in thickness. Red and white camellias and azaleas were blossoming luxuriantly, and climbing vines of heliotrope clung to the walls. Flights of stone steps conducted beside dried cascades from terrace to terrace, and statues dark with age guarded ever-young hedges of roses in full bloom. Everywhere in the landscape stood the sombre cypresses which had gained such beauty in the sight of these strangers, their slender spires delicately and permanently bent by vanished winds. Eunice went humming to herself through the still old garden, Edwina following absorbed in thoughts which in these days colored any environment and made it lovely. At last Miss Pritchard started with recollection.

"I hope you 're watching the time, Ned."

"Any time now we might go."

"Well, I should n't like to miss any of it."

Eunice's enthusiasm lasted even under the strain of that long afternoon. It was their first experience of a crowd in St. Peter's. The service consisted of the Tenebre, the Miserere, and the washing of the High Altar. It began at half-past four, and a multitude gathered in the vast edifice.

"I never before knew what was meant by the expression, 'the tide of humanity,'" said Edwina.

A sound precisely like the surge of the sea went up from the crowd and continued in rhythmic measure during the long hours that they sat on their backless camp-stools and listened to the monotonous chant, and the impressive Miserere.

Daylight faded, and under the gathering shadows the sea of humanity surged on. Darkness fell, torches glimmered here and there throughout the church. At last a procession of cardinals and canons, each bearing a lighted candle, slowly marched to the altar under the dome, poured oil and wine upon it, and wiped it off in token of humility.

Next was to come the rare showing of the relics in St. Veronica's balcony, above the colossal statue of the saint running to show the towel which bears the imprint of the Saviour's face. This balcony was lighted with tall candles, making a luminous spot in the vast dark. Suddenly there came a sharp noise like what might be produced by a huge watchman's rattle, and all eyes were raised. A prelate came out upon the balcony bearing the spear-point that pierced Jesus' side. It was a marvel how the human sea stopped surging and absolute silence fell upon the thousands of worshipers. Nearly all the crowd sank upon their knees.

The priest retired. After a minute, again sounded the mysterious, sharp warning, and he reappeared with a piece of the cross. A third time, and it was Veronica's towel. In the hush and darkness the priest's robed figure suspended in a bright halo, and holding forth the glittering framed objects, struck an awe to that multitude of kneeling worshipers which all might feel. At last the light vanished, the spell was broken, and hastily the crowd arose and poured away invisibly across the marble floor.

Eunice held Edwina tightly. "Don't lose me, Ned. It 's nearly as bad as the Catacombs. I can't see my hand before me."

Slowly they pressed their way out, and the first thing they observed on reaching the fresh air was that umbrellas had sprung mushroom-like all over the piazza. The fountains gleamed ghostly-white through the murky air.

"We 'll never get a cab in the world, Ned!" cried Miss Pritchard.

"Nor a car for an hour at least," replied her companion. "Why, I should think that was — it is Mr. Champion standing there by that pillar."

"Let 's go to him!" Eunice craned her neck in all directions to recognize her friend in need, in order not to be dependent upon Edwina's reluctant guidance. "I can't see him. Don't be foolish, Ned. It 's after eight o'clock, and I 'm tired and famished. He 'll help us, I 'm sure, otherwise I don't see how we 're ever going to get home."

"What can he do?"

"I don't know, but he can always do something. Oh, there he is! I see him!"

"Well, don't let go of me!" exclaimed Edwina, suppressing a laugh.

"Hurry, then. We must catch him before he goes!"

The girl well knew he would not go before the last woman had descended that broad sweep of steps, on the length and breadth of which he was keeping close watch; but she yielded to Miss Pritchard's nervous pulling, and approached the tall figure next the pillar.

CHAPTER XIII

THE COLOSSEUM

"Mr. Champion!" cried Eunice eagerly.

He turned, his eyes resting on Edwina with a look she feared her cousin would observe.

"If you had been hunting for us, it would have been worse than the search for the needle in the hay-mow," went on Miss Pritchard joyously.

"I was, in a way. I thought it likely you would be here, and finding it raining, I saw you would have trouble to get home. I found they were n't letting people come out by the Holy Door, so that narrowed the exit, and gave me some hope of seeing you in the jam."

"And instead we saw you. How easily we might have missed each other!"

"Yes, it was the hundredth chance, and I won."

"You 're very good!" Eunice cast her glance down to the piazza, where whips were cracking and wheels rolling, while the usual order of things was reversed, most of the would-be passengers searching vainly for cabs and the successful applicants paying double fare.

"I suppose it 's going to be hard to get a carriage," she remarked, wondering why Champion was so deliberate.

"No, I have one waiting. Are you ready? Can you make this umbrella do for you both, Miss Wilder?"

They moved down the glistening steps to a waiting cab and entered it.

"I've good news for you, Miss Pritchard," said the young man as the horse started.

"The Pope!"

"Yes; I shall have tickets for the Friday after Easter at St. Peter's."

"How can I thank you enough! Edwina, how can we thank him?"

"Oh, I shall get my reward, never fear. Sometime I shall be asking a favor of you, perhaps, Miss Pritchard."

"I only wish you would," she returned heartily. "I'm sure we owe you a great deal; and Edwina feels it too, Mr. Champion, though she never says very much."

Here followed a coercive pressure of her child's arm in the darkness.

"If you are quite sure she does," said Champion after a moment's silence, "then I shall not scruple to ask a favor of her too."

At that such an imperative nudge assailed Edwina that she found her voice. "All this sounds very commercial," she said. "This promising in the dark is dangerous, don't you think, cousin Eunice?"

"She's joking, Mr. Champion, as usual. I can't get her to be serious. She always was naughty when she was hungry, anyway. I can't tell you the number of times I punished that child before I found out that she needed bread and milk instead of a dark closet."

Her companions both laughed, and the sound relieved the tension of Miss Pritchard's brow. "I do think he has the most amiable, forgiving disposition I ever met," she thought; and to her further relief, Edwina spoke again.

"I 'm really very much pleased that you could get the tickets, Mr. Champion. Cousin Eunice had so set her heart on it, and I could n't find out any definite way of procuring them."

"There, is n't that gracious, Miss Pritchard?" asked the young man. "One would believe that Miss Edwina had found the bread and milk. By the way, you would get scarcely more than that at the pension by the time you reached home. We 'd better find something to eat on the way."

"I think so," said Miss Pritchard, "if you will be my guest."

"But I like to be host."

"So do I. Be careful! I don't stand opposition myself very well when I 'm hungry."

Among the pleasantest occurrences in her life Edwina always afterward remembered the cosy supper in that private room, although she ate very little of it. Miss Pritchard talked absorbedly of her Roman interests, and Edwina and Champion listened enough to be able to answer, while they were keenly conscious of the delight of passing one another the bread or the salt, and occasionally each caught the light in the other's eyes. Suddenly Miss Pritchard diverged from commenting on the relics they had been seeing displayed, to gaze pensively into her wineglass, where the *Asti spumente* was bubbling.

"What would Miranda say if she knew that I was used to drinking wine, — *used* to it! This," sipping it judicially, "is very good, like sparkling cider, only grape-y instead of apple-y. It tastes real innocent, I think, Mr. Champion, and very, very nice; but we never drink wine at home — never — and never shall. When you come to see us you will get cold water only."

"That 's all right so long as you don't pour any of it on our friendship; but water is a little thin for drinking toasts. Now that we are together, perhaps I had better utilize the opportunity to get your good wishes. Here — and let us drink it standing — I ask you both to drink to my future wife."

Eunice rose, gazing at her friend with a new interest. His face was very serious, hers beaming with friendly surprise. "What! are you going to be married?"

"I hope so, Miss Pritchard."

"Stand up, Ned," warningly, for the girl lingered in her chair. "Stand up, dear."

"She has n't the excuse of hunger now for being naughty, has she?" said Champion, and after another second's pause, Edwina rose.

"Be careful, Mr. Champion," she said gravely. "You must never let your — your fiancée meet my cousin. She would frighten her away from marriage. She does not believe in men."

Eunice regarded her contrary child with surprise and chagrin. "It is uncivil of you to talk so at this time, my dear," she said gently. "I am a very ignorant woman about many things, and there are exceptions to every rule."

"You promised to tell me when you met an exception."

This obstinate indelicacy covered Miss Pritchard with confusion. Here was the last proof needed of her child's arrogant attitude toward Champion.

"I am very glad for the young lady," she said earnestly, recovering herself and bowing toward him, "that she has won a man who, whatever faults he may have, has proven himself the soul of thoughtful kindness to strangers in a strange land."

Champion was reading Edwina's face eagerly. It looked cool and impassive. The pretty lips were set in a proud curve. The eyelids no longer lifted for him. He saw that he must go no further, — perhaps in his rush of happiness had gone too far.

"I thank you, Miss Pritchard," he said. "We drink to her then."

Eunice turned toward Edwina. "To the health, happiness, and life-long prosperity of you both," she said.

The girl heeded the commanding note in her cousin's voice. She touched her glass to her lips and sat down quickly, as pale as she had been rosy.

When they reached home and their escort had said good-night, Miss Pritchard put her arms around her child in an unusual caress. "You act as if you were tired out, Ned. We've been doing too much, I'm afraid. You are n't tired of Rome, are you?"

Edwina returned the embrace, and nestled her cheek against her companion's silky hair. "I love Rome. I could never grow tired of it," she said low and fervently.

"Oh, well, then," said Miss Pritchard, relieved.

"You need n't stop loving me just on that account," said Edwina, holding the other's relaxing arms.

"I could n't do that, though you do exasperate me beyond words to express, Ned." Eunice spoke reproachfully while she patted the girl's shoulder. "Not a word of congratulation or sympathy to that good, kind young man at such a time. Think of throwing a wet blanket on him when he confided in us! How could you, dear?"

"Is n't that the way you have brought me up?" came the muffled inquiry close to Eunice's ear. "I think I did well not to tell him that he was a monster who was going to make her wretched, and that she was totally unreasonable to love him."

"He may turn out a very unusual husband.

I 'm sure we have every reason to give him the benefit of the doubt; and the point I make is that it is none of our business any way, and has nothing to do with us, and that he had a right to expect our courtesy and interest. Two or three times, Edwina, you have surprised me by what can't be termed anything milder than rudeness to Mr. Champion, and I have almost a mind to talk with your teachers when I get home and tell them that I 'm dissatisfied with their training. It is n't all my fault."

Edwina stood up and began to take out her hairpins. "I 'll try to do better," she said meekly.

"You went back and said something to him just as we parted to-night. I meant to ask you what it was."

"Oh — that?" said the girl with some embarrassment. "I just — I only asked him not to — not to call — very often."

Miss Pritchard plumped down on the side of the bed and stared at her child as if hopeless of doing the subject justice. "I suppose you did n't say exactly that, Ned," she appealed at last gently. "I suppose you expressed a fear that he might find us away."

"I — I might have put it that way," said Edwina with an unmistakably guilty manner, "but I did n't. I just said — that. You know, cousin Eunice, we have so much still planned to do, and shall be so busy."

"Right after he had got the promise of those tickets!" said Eunice, looking about as if calling upon the furniture to witness her despair. "No one would stand that, not even Mr. Champion. Very well, Edwina Wilder, we shall receive a note from him to-morrow withdrawing about the tickets, — and I shan't blame him, remember. He is perfectly justified in anything he may do."

When Miss Pritchard pronounced her full name, Edwina knew the stress of feeling indicated. "Really, I don't think he is offended," she remarked earnestly. "He knows how absorbing sightseeing is."

"Your time is n't so valuable when it comes to reading Mr. Glenn's letters," said Miss Pritchard bitterly, "and writing him, I don't know how many pages. There 's plenty of time, then."

Edwina repressed a smile at the small ruffled individual on the bed, and shook her thick blonde hair about her face. "Now stop scolding me," she said coaxingly, "until you find out whether your paragon has been hurt or not."

"If he is n't, it will be only because his head is so full of his sweetheart that anything any one else may say falls flat."

"Do you know, cousin Eunice, I think that is the precise state of the case," said the girl gently.

Perhaps the love of a lover cannot be killed out in the most pessimistic breast. At all events, Miss Pritchard's expression changed to one of reminiscent interest.

"He took me greatly by surprise, somehow," she said. "I don't know why he should n't be in love, I 'm sure; but I suppose I don't think about those things. Do you mean you had suspected it before to-day?"

Edwina nodded her head slowly.

"When? Why?" curiously.

"Oh, some of those days at Cannes. I thought I saw signs."

"Well, that was clever of you," said Eunice admiringly; but her brow clouded. "All the more reason why you should have been prepared and responsive to-day."

"You must alter your training, then," said Edwina, smiling behind the veil of hair she was brushing. "As the twig is bent, the tree inclines, you know. I 'm afraid it is your doing, and not my teachers'."

These two Americans had had expectations that Easter in Holy Week of the Jubilee year at St. Peter's would be a marvelous celebration. They and those useful companions, the camp-stools, were in the church that morning before nine o'clock, and they took up their situation near the altar. The crowd was very large, and the tide ebbed and flowed with the same surging sound as on the previous Thursday. Cardinal Rampolla, assisted by a large number of priests, conducted the elaborate service, about which there was much pomp and ceremony. The music was interesting; but in all that huge church not one flower bloomed, and spite of the red cloth hangings upon the colossal pillars, the effect was of gloom, as if the thought had not been able to get past the crucifixion.

Miss Pritchard whispered to Edwina in the midst of the service: "There is n't a little village church in Massachusetts where it would n't seem more like Easter than this!"

It remained to be seen if the long-anticipated view of Leo XIII. were going to prove another disappointment.

Howard Champion again vindicated his superiority by failing to take offense at Edwina's frankness. Right after dinner a note from him arrived inclosing the coveted tickets. Miss Pritchard, upon opening and reading it, enlarged, greatly to the girl's edification, upon the nobility of nature, the broad mind, the admirably impersonal outlook and lack of pettiness which this action proved.

"Although I must say, Ned, when I was your age, if a young man like that had ignored everything I did and said as Mr. Champion does you, it would have piqued me some," she added.

Edwina folded her hands and regarded her cousin, smiling. "You see, then," she returned, "that he is not the only broad-minded, lofty nature of your acquaintance, for I am not at all disturbed. Praise me a little while for a change."

"Indeed I won't," said Eunice, looking fondly at the pieces of stamped paper, "when I think you put these in peril!"

"I am only pleased that he has obeyed me so well in staying away," remarked the girl. "However, if he had withdrawn about the tickets, you would have seen me eat humble pie. I would n't have such a crime as that on my conscience for any consideration! I should have written him to come at once; to call three times a day if it suited him."

"As if that would have brought him around!" said Miss Pritchard scornfully. "He would n't have come at all!"

"Then I should have gone to him," said Edwina, her eyes dancing. "We would have enacted a scene from grand opera. I should have worn a long train and a heavy veil, and you would have been my duenna. We should have hunted him down in his hotel, and I should have pleaded and cried and seized his hand" —

"I 'd like to see you seizing Mr. Champion's hand!" ejaculated Eunice dryly.

"Would you really? I might if I were properly urged."

"Here, do something with these flowers, Ned," for hyacinths and violets had accompanied the note. "I do think he was too sweet to send them. I suppose he was thinking of that girl, and wishing he could send them to her."

"Not a doubt of it," agreed Edwina.

"If you had n't embarrassed me so that night, I should have asked him who she was. He would have told, in the mood he was then!"

"Ah, we 're going back to that night, are we? Let us dispose of these flowers by wearing them. Do you think you could spare me a few?"

The girl pinned the hyacinths in the front of her cousin's gown.

"They are as much yours as mine, perhaps," said Eunice. "He is quite capable of it."

"Then if you think so, I will wear his lordship's violets."

Miss Pritchard watched the little satisfied smile with which the girl arranged the purple fragrance on her bosom, and commented silently: "If she is n't the oddest child that ever breathed! I declare, nobody could get me to put those on in her place. How can she be sure he won't come in? I 'd be too proud for that if I 'd acted the way she has."

"Well, the afternoon is perfect," said Edwina when the flowers were satisfactorily arranged. "Let us go over to the Borghese Gardens. The Queen always drives there on Easter, I hear."

"I never come into these grounds without thinking of Ariadne," said Edwina, after they had paid their entrance fee and were strolling in the grand avenues of the old garden.

"My head is full of 'The Marble Faun' and 'Ariadne' both, all the time," returned Miss Pritchard, her arm through her child's; "and what with my own thoughts and imaginings, and so much picturesqueness, I sometimes feel as if I had n't good sense any more."

"Precisely my sensations," remarked Edwina.

"Are n't we having a good time — just we two alone!" burst forth Eunice, sighing in one of the ecstasies of satisfaction to which she sometimes rose.

"So you don't want any one else. My rival is n't quite my equal?" hazarded Edwina, listening painfully for the reply to her jest.

"You silly child!" Eunice laughed and gave the round arm a squeeze.

"Oh, well, please recollect there have been a number of occasions when I did n't fill the void at all."

"Men do seem almost a necessity sometimes," said Miss Pritchard lightly; "but I lay awake a good deal last night, and I got to thinking of one thing after another, and you 'd laugh at me well, Edwina, if you knew why two or three tears wet my pillow."

"I doubt if I could laugh at your tears, little Mother Eunice."

"My darling!" Miss Pritchard gave the arm a more loving pressure. "Is n't this the most romantic place? Just look at the variety of wild flowers — what yellows and purples and reds! Let us go and sit among them."

They had reached the old fountain where horses rear from a basin, their aged mouths filled with weeds and maidenhair fern. The water trickling amid mosses made pleasant murmuring, and venerable trees shaded the fields about.

"We will sit here and watch for Margherita," said Edwina, "and you shall tell me this waking dream of yours. Was it romantic enough to fit this scene?"

"Oh, you 'll laugh at me, as I said." Eunice stooped and caressed a buttercup. "But your asking about your rival and if I was satisfied with us two alone, brought it back to me. Is n't it queer how night will bring thoughts you 'd never have in the daytime? I was thinking of Mr. Champion, and how kind he 'd been, and wondering if his sweetheart felt about him as — well, as girls do when they believe everything to be rose-color; and I said to myself, suppose he had happened to please Edwina, and we had gone on in ignorance, just as we have, of any love-affair, and she had set her heart on him — don't laugh, Ned." The speaker looked up quickly, to find an unbroken gravity on her companion's face, and its expression seemed to encourage her, for she proceeded with more confidence. "For they do; sometimes girls don't wait for any encouragement or persuasion, they just set their hearts on some particular man, and could n't give a reason for it to save them. Well, I supposed the case, and your never having confided in me, you know, and then his suddenly telling us of his engagement there as he did in the supper-room; and I seemed to realize it, and it worked on me so, the first thing I knew I was crying. Was n't it silly?"

"That would be dreadful," said Edwina seriously.

"It 's like death. There is n't anything else to compare with it; and because it 's the worst thing in the world, I 've always had a horror lest it should come to you; and that 's what makes this day seem heavenly to me; makes those loud bird-notes and all this flowery grass seem like paradise; to think you 're right here by me fancy-free."

"But if there had n't been any one in the way," said Edwina, "I suppose you would have been glad to have me as susceptible in this case as you dreamed."

Miss Pritchard put her hand on her child's lap. "Thank God, we 've been spared so far!"

"Then you will always want us to be spared, for I cannot hope you will like any man better than Mr. Champion."

The note of dejection in her companion's voice made Eunice look at her quickly. "Ah, Ned, you are like all the rest! You prefer to try this experiment of marriage in spite of everything."

"Not in spite of everything," returned the girl. "Least of all in spite of you. Remember my promise. That subject is settled."

With painful clearness Ralph Glenn's face beamed upon Miss Pritchard's mental vision as if projected on a screen, and she looked off over the flowery meads where the children were dancing, during a minute of silence. "We 're happy until we go home though, Ned, are n't we?" she asked at last, appealingly.

"Indeed, we are," replied Edwina brightly, "until we go home, and after we go home, and always. I think by the way the people are gathering, the Queen must be expected. Let us stand here right by the road, for if any one gets in front of you, you can't see."

They waited a few minutes, watching the handsome, swarthy people in their holiday attire, and the clipped poodles drinking at the fountain where their woolly wristers were sprayed. At last came the welcome warning, "*Ecco Regina!*" and the brilliant scarlet liveries appeared. The gay carriage passed close to the Americans, and the queen's kindly glance and gracious smile were turned to the right and left as she bowed to the uncovered little crowd. Her handsome, vivacious face was framed in a profusion of fluffy golden hair, upon which rested a bonnet of pearl beads. Beside her sat her mother, and both were chatting and laughing in gay unconsciousness that this was the last Easter drive of the well-loved sovereign.

That evening Edwina stood long on her balcony watching a brilliant sun set behind the Villa Medici. It was as if Rome were again on fire, and she watched the flame turn to gold and fade until the cypresses stood black against a primrose sky. For a long time she lingered there, wrapped in thought, unobservant of the change from twilight to moonlight until Miss Pritchard's voice speaking to some one in the room attracted her attention. The voice came nearer.

"Edwina, Mr. Champion is here." There was a warning note in the announcement, explained immediately by the fact that that personage came treading upon the heels, as it were, of the speaker.

"I don't know how many this tiny balcony will hold," said the girl, giving her hand to the newcomer.

"I know it is cold for you to be standing here without a wrap, my child. I did n't realize what you were doing."

"I thought I might trespass," said Champion, relinquishing the hand reluctantly, "since it is all in the line of sight-seeing. I wondered if you had visited the Colosseum by moonlight?"

"No indeed, we have n't," returned Eunice. "It is just the night for it!"

"Remarkably fine. If I had been sure of such an evening, I would have waited to bring those tickets myself instead of sending them."

"It was very well that you sent them," said Edwina. "Cousin Eunice has had just so many more hours of peace of mind."

"We 'll get our things right on, Mr. Champion," said Miss Pritchard eagerly.

"Very well; and I will call a cab."

Eunice had supped so full of horrors connected with the Colosseum that an evening visit to it filled her with weird fascination. There were few tourists present to-night beside themselves, and she wandered about the great interior clinging to Champion's arm until her eyes became used to the black shadows and the white moonlight. The three sat down on an oblong rock at last and silently gazed at the vast encircling walls.

Miss Pritchard's thoughts were busy with the beginning of the Christian era; her companions' with the present day and hour. Hers drove her very soon to the railing which surrounds the excavations in the centre of the amphitheatre. She had before gazed into those suggestive depths where wild beasts and their prey alike were once confined, waiting to make sport for the populace.

Sçarce had her light figure hurried away when Champion took Edwina's hand, and she yielded it.

"It's true, dear?" he said with eager appeal.

"Truth is stranger than fiction!" called Miss Pritchard from her stand by the railing.

At her voice Edwina started, and tried to withdraw her hand.

"We are in shadow," said Champion as he held it fast. "Don't be anxious. Why are you so afraid, Edwina?"

"Because it means so much to me," said the girl, breathing fast.

"But she likes me."

"She would dislike you instantly if" —

"Then is she to prevent me always" —

"I think not. I have — I have hopes; but it will be painful unless you are careful and do just as I say."

"I am going to do that always," said Champion with prompt rashness, "if you love me."

"Oh, she 's coming! Be careful!"

"Do you love me?"

"Never mind." Edwina spoke low and in a panic. "My father spoiled her life. I 've made a vow to think of her first — before anybody, even before you. Be patient and trust me. Do as I do. Promise me!"

"Yes, if you will do as I do, and love with all your heart. Do you — Edwina?"

"I — I think so; and I must have her full approval, or never be happy again" —

This music to Champion's ears overpowered his caution. He caught Edwina in his arms and pressed his lips to hers. She shrank from him and clung to him in the same breath; then springing to her feet looked apprehensively toward her cousin.

Miss Pritchard had changed her position, but was again leaning over the railing. Champion, his elbows on his knees, rested his pulsing temples in his hands. Edwina moved away a short distance to recover herself before strolling back slowly toward Eunice. The moon stealing up past the yawning windows was flooding the amphitheatre with whiteness when the girl drew near her cousin. She found her seated on a stone.

"Why cousin Eunice, what is the matter?" she asked solicitously, for Miss Pritchard's face was buried in her handkerchief.

"Oh Ned, Ned!" exclaimed Eunice huskily. She revealed her wet eyes, only to bury them again. "To think it isn't made up, — it isn't a dream or anything like that, but it's true — it's true!"

"What is, dear?" asked the girl fearfully, stooping and in her excitement ready to add her tears to her cousin's.

"Those — those martyrs! Just because they were faithful and self-denying, to think they were given to the beasts in this very place! And we can have the heart to come and look and stare around and take it calmly!"

"There is n't anything else to do, dear!" returned Edwina, putting her arms around the other's small shaken form. "Don't cry, cousin Eunice; it hurts me dreadfully. I hardly ever saw you cry in my life."

"I know it," sobbed the little woman. "I did all my crying before ever you knew me, and it was enough to last; but now — Ned — now" —

By this time Champion approached, and seeing Eunice weeping, gave a startled look of inquiry at Edwina.

The girl shook her head. "She began to think about all the cruel things that went on here," she explained, "and it overcame her. She is tired, poor little cousin. We 've had such a busy week. I 'm going to take her right home and put her to bed. She never had any nerves before; did you, dear?"

Miss Pritchard's trembling was such that Edwina feared it might mean a chill, and vague forebodings of Roman fever shook her own nerves.

"I think it 's a very right thing to cry," moaned Eunice. "It 's worse than a thousand cemeteries."

"Yes," returned Edwina, patting her and trying to bring a smile to her face. "Mr. Remick ought to come, ought he not? He should be here instead of you. You are like Miss Remick. You remember she said that instead of cheering her, cemeteries made her quite low."

CHAPTER XIV

THE POPE

Miss Pritchard looked tired and pale the next day, but she stoutly denied the fact, and declared herself ready for a trip to the Pantheon, hastening her companion's preparations with undiminished energy. As they entered the ancient church a male quartette was singing, preparing for some service. The effect was thrilling. Eunice and Edwina stood still and listened, looking far up through the opening overhead into the sky, feeling, as Hilda did, that angels might pass and repass across its circle. They lingered for a time beside the famous tombs and then went on to the Forum.

The next day they went over the ruins on the Palatine Hill, and the next to Hadrian's villa. In vain Edwina protested her fear that her cousin would overdo. Miss Pritchard laughed. "Nonsense, child! I'll never cry again where you are. You have treated me ever since Sunday evening as if I were made of egg-shell china. This weather is too perfect to lose. Moreover, it will make Friday come quicker if we keep doing things."

Champion remained obediently invisible until Thursday morning, when he presented himself at an early hour and asked for Miss Pritchard. She answered his summons promptly. His face was bright as he met her. "I think I have an opportunity for you," he said. "I discovered last evening that Monsignor Baccelli is about to take a party through the private rooms of the Vatican today. He has given me permission to bring you and Miss Wilder."

"That is an opportunity. How good! Are we to come now?"

"At once, please."

"Very well. I will call Edwina."

When the three were in their cab driving toward St. Peter's, Champion looked at Miss Pritchard quizzically. "Have you repented frightening us so the other evening at the Colosseum?"

She made a quick little motion, averting her head. "I don't like to talk about that."

"Cousin Eunice does n't weep often enough to take it easily," remarked Edwina.

"Ah? I thought a good cry was one of a woman's greatest luxuries."

"Some women, perhaps. I shall never go inside that Colosseum again," said Eunice shortly.

Edwina had supplemented her hasty interview with her lover by a letter in which she anticipated the impatience which he might now feel with the obstacle to their happiness. She expressed fully her tenderness of her cousin, her debt to her, her duty to her, and her unalterable determination never to oppose her in a serious matter. She endeavored to explain to him Miss Pritchard's standpoint, and to enlist his sympathies for her. She told him frankly that to gain Eunice's affection more and more, going on as he had begun, was their best hope; and telling him that everything depended on himself, she ended with a few gentle words of affection which he immediately cut from the letter and placed in his pocket book, from which he drew them for perusal several times an hour.

To this wooing, then, he immediately gave redoubled attention. He had already been so assiduously kind to the guardian of his queen of the rosebud garden of girls that it would be less noticeable for him to continue his benefits than to withdraw them and fume, as he should have been likely to do but for Edwina's pacific and warning letter. Their time in Rome was growing short, and he had seized at this exceptional chance to do Miss Pritchard a favor quite in the line of her eager interest.

Arrived at the Vatican, the three joined the small group of tourists with whom was Champion's priestly friend. He introduced them to Monsignor Baccelli, whose gentle, strong face lighted with benevolent welcome, his beautiful eyes beaming expressively as Eunice tried to compress into a few words her gratitude for the tickets he had sent.

"I am glad," said Monsignor simply. "The boy's friends are my friends."

"If Miranda could see us now!" whispered Miss Pritchard to Edwina as they climbed the first flight of stairs, following the long black coat and flat beaver hat of the priest, before whom the Swiss guards in their gay garb fell back, and impenetrable gates swung wide.

Edwina smiled. "I fancy Miranda would develop a better judgment too," she answered. "I think she would send you the keys of the apartment at once."

"Just think! He lives here!" said Eunice.

"And has space enough for a single man," suggested Champion; "several thousand rooms."

"And never can even eat with anybody," added Miss Pritchard, her eyes quite round from the interest with which she followed the company into a room hung with Gobelin tapestries.

The pilgrimage was a long one, up and down interminable broad flights of marble stairs which now replace the inclined planes up which the Popes rode their horses. Sometimes they came out on a balcony which overlooked one of the twenty-four enormous courts around which the palace is built, and where in days of old took place the races and other sports which entertained the leisure hours of the papal suite.

Once, before descending a flight of stairs, Monsignor put himself at the head of his party, his finger on his lips. "Kindly do not speak until we are down," he said. "We are about to pass by the apartment of the Holy Father, and he might be disturbed."

Amazingly exciting this to Miss Pritchard, who crept down like a small shadow and only took a full breath when she had reached the foot.

Finally they were taken into the spacious gardens of the palace, a large bit of country in the heart of Rome which is invisible from the outside, and which gives the lonely potentate his glimpses of nature. Fountains, flowers, carefully kept walks are there in abundance, but also a forest, — a wild-wood on whose outskirts stands the villa which is the Pope's summer house.

"We are always having something to thank you for," said Miss Pritchard to Champion when finally he put the weary ladies into a cab.

"And yet you will go away and leave me!" he responded humorously.

"I suppose we can't take you with us," she replied, in the same tone.

Edwina, as her habit was when Champion was with them, had kept a neutral silence when not compelled to speak.

"But you are a luxury we did n't count on when we came over," went on Eunice, "an extra, you know. Edwina and I are equal to all the necessities alone, are n't we, Ned?"

"Indeed we are, and content as the day is long."

"You need n't emphasize it," said Champion, with a comical shrug. "Would it be too much to ask you to write to me occasionally, Miss Pritchard? I shall very much want to know where you are and how you are getting on."

"It is the least I can do," she returned; "but I'm a sorry letter writer. Perhaps I can copy one of Edwina's numerous epistles sometime."

She continued to look at him as the cab rolled away, and he stood with lifted hat. Edwina rejoiced in the liking she believed was in her eyes.

The next morning the two took an early breakfast, and with their camp-stools mounted into a cab and set off for St. Peter's. It was only half past eight when they drove beneath the swaying cloudy curtains of the great fountains.

"I don't like the looks of those Carabinieri," remarked Edwina, observing the phalanx of soldiers that guarded the grand entrance to the church. As their cab stopped as near as possible to the steps, one of the Carabinieri approached, and Edwina gathered only too clearly from his words that the ever-open doors were closed this morning until ten o'clock.

Making the best of the situation, they took their camp-stools into the colonnade, clasping tightly the precious pink tickets which were to allow them to enter by the bronze door half an hour before the crowd were admitted; and here they gave themselves up to watching the marvelous variety of human beings which were already gathering from all directions. The city was full of pilgrims. Sixteen thousand had arrived a few days before. One met them everywhere, — this army of peasants, carrying their bundles and patiently trudging the rounds to pray at the seven basilicas. It seemed as if types of every sort of costume in Italy must be represented. Picturesque headgear and massive earrings sometimes adorned a full young face whose long lashes shaded a peachy cheek, and again a bright handkerchief surrounded the leathery wrinkled visage of an old woman whose coarse, bunchy skirt failed to reach the tops of her cumbersome shoes. This morning a pretty girl in velvet bodice and snowy chemisette lifted child-like eyes to Edwina.

"American?" she asked in a sweet voice.

"Yes," said Edwina.

"You give me money?"

"No," replied the astonished girl.

"No?" echoed the Italian with unruffled sweetness, and moved away. It had evidently been her experience that Americans existed only to bestow money.

Four thousand of these pilgrims, whose presence was the occasion of to-day's reception, were lodged and fed in and about the Vatican. Great had been the struggle for tickets, as Eunice and Edwina had been hearing all the week.

A crowd of lucky possessors of the pink slips gathered during that hour in the colonnade, and at last the guard stood back and the rush began. Eunice and Edwina were well toward the front, and the press was great toward the narrow aperture where the tickets were examined.

Monsignor Baccelli had explained to them just how the railings would be placed, between which the *Saint Père* would be carried, and others beside themselves were coveting the more favorable positions. Moreover, confusion was made by persons whose tickets only admitted at the general doors, coming to this one through misunderstanding. They, pushing down while the others pushed up, made the situation difficult, the more so that more or less rage glowed in their breasts. One priest who with his party had been sent back happened to glare at Edwina. She now understood enough Italian to gather that he was demanding to know who issued their tickets. "Monsignor Baccelli," she said; and it was interesting to note the calming effect of the name on the irate priest.

A man in evening clothes and silk hat stood inside the rail gesturing soothingly over the seething mass on the staircase and crying, "Piano! piano!" to those detachments who were let through the gate. But two Americans in that motley crowd had not been pinched, and crushed, and bruised with their camp-stools for nothing. Eunice and Edwina fled into the empty, solemn church, outside which in the piazza a vast crowd was gathering. The few hundreds who entered with them made no impression on the spaces, and they succeeded in setting their camp-stools in the desired angle of the railing.

They had brought books to read during the hours of waiting; but it was not a time for books. The sacred avenue before them was filled with entertaining notables; Swiss Guards in their best and brightest, army officers in various and handsome uniforms, ushers in evening dress wearing orders and medals, and Roman princes in black velvet cavalier costume, with ruff, sword, and brilliant buckles, wearing about their necks splendid gold chains ending in the papal keys and crown. From time to time dignitaries of the church were passed up the avenue, arrayed in white, purple, and cardinal. Once a Russian grand duchess passed in black trailing robes and veil, royally escorted by the Swiss Guards.

"What would Miranda say!" exclaimed Miss Pritchard.

Now the great doors were opened, and fifty thousand people flowed into the basilica. They streamed across the distant spaces in black lines, looking like ants. The pilgrims lined up against the railings, and the multitude waited patiently, most of them standing, until one hour had passed. This was the appointed time, and expectation was on tiptoe; but another half-hour wore away, and still the sea surged and the door into the Vatican remained closed. Another fifteen minutes passed, and a murmur arose and spread. The Pope was coming.

Miss Pritchard's heart beat against her ribs in surprising excitement. She tried to steady herself with the repressive thought of Miranda. In vain, for now the anticipated vision smote upon her view. Twelve men in cardinal velvet brocade bore velvet-covered poles on their shoulders. In the midst was the rich red throne and platform, gorgeously encrusted with gold symbols, which held the spirituel form of this adored being who rules over three hundred million souls.

The multitude was swept as with a wind. "Viva! Viva! Viva!" burst forth as he went, and in his wake the peasant pilgrims, with streaming eyes, and arms crossed on their breasts, swayed to and fro as if an angel had passed. In the thrill of it one could not feel repugnance for the worship of this sweet-faced man of ninety years, — so pure and perfect a picture he made. Clothed all in rich ivory-white not whiter than his face, a cap of white, white sash, and shoes embroidered in gold, white mitts on his hands, below which gleamed the famous emerald ring surrounded with brilliants as he constantly raised the hand in blessing. From time to time he lifted himself bodily from the throne, the glowing background enhancing the picture as he looked to this side and to that, his delicate raised hand trembling visibly. The excitement was intense. Women held up rosaries and other objects to be blessed, and the cries increased in fervor.

"It will kill him! It will kill him!" Eunice was repeating. She leaned forward and tried to watch as at last he was helped from his chair. Waving off his supporting cardinals, he ascended the steps of the high altar and conducted a service. Eunice and Edwina waited another hour, listening to the responses of the rough peasant voices, and then with the same pomp and circumstance, Leo XIII. was brought back. Loud, loving, inspiring were the "Vivas!" that continued while he was in sight, and bravely the old man acknowledged them with benediction. At last, when his cavalcade had turned and nearly reached the door to his palace, he sank back in his chair and pressed his handkerchief to his lips.

"Will he ever be able to do this again?" exclaimed Edwina, as the crowd began to move.

"I don't know," returned Eunice, her thin cheeks scarlet; "but we have seen the Pope!"

CHAPTER XV

THE BLUE GROTTO

UNDER the influence of another note which Edwina sent to Champion's hotel, his manner in seeing them off at the station in Rome was such that the last glance she gave him was one warm with gratitude and appreciation of his self-control. Her anxiety lest he betray himself to Miss Pritchard's unsuspicious eyes had been so keen that she had not had space to realize her own share of the pang of parting until the train was fairly started for Naples. Then she sat and looked out of the window for so long a period of silence that Eunice, sitting opposite, leaned forward.

"You have n't a headache, I hope, Ned?"

Had Miss Pritchard comprehended the situation, she must have been touched by the reassuring brightness that overspread her child's face.

"I find I am tired after all," answered Edwina, "and I think it 's a little mournful leaving Rome, don't you?"

"Well, you just take a good rest now. Lean back in that corner and shut your eyes."

The girl obeyed thankfully. It is sometimes such a priceless privilege to be left to one's own thoughts. Edwina's were so tenderly reminiscent that she quickly made them disciplinary. She recognized the danger that henceforth she would see all beauty merely as a background for one figure, and would lose the value of these sunny Italian days in wishing them to hurry by and bring nearer the time when she and her lover could meet again. She lifted her eyelids sufficiently to look at her cousin. Eunice was gazing from the opposite window with a serious, almost sad preoccupation. Edwina knew that the little woman could not read, and would in fact suspend all activity until she herself showed her customary animation.

Miss Pritchard's patient dependence might well have irritated her in her present mood; but the girl loyally resisted the sensation. The look in the gentle eyes only reinforced her determination that neither lover nor any lesser influence should cloud her little guardian's wedding trip. There were but four months left. They should be entirely devoted to fulfilling every expectation that Eunice had formed.

One of these was visiting the Aquarium at Naples, so on the first morning of their few days in that city they turned their steps to the long park bordering the lovely bay, and left the daylight to go down among the dwellers in the sea. All the joys of the Water Babies suggested themselves to our travelers as they stood before the crystal tanks lighted from above. In one were a number of those fluted bivalves which one usually sees filled with velvet and stuck full of pins. Here they were alive, and performing such wonderful and airy acts that the visitors could scarcely believe their eyes. They flew through the water with the lightness of butterflies, their shells opening and closing swiftly like wings, while about them were the sentimental little sea-horses with their heads on one side, gazing at each other as if in a trance. One tank looked like a florist's window with flowers of intense colors, chrysanthemums and dahlias, living and glowing. Another was like a milliner's exhibit, with great variety of feathers and fringes all alive. The jeweler's window was rich in a variety of corals. All sorts of creatures, from the ugly cuttle-fish hiding himself in an inky cloud to the scaly beauty whose sides were an iridescent rainbow, were to be studied there, and Eunice and Edwina lingered for hours.

At their hotel they met a young American from the West who had just landed, and who eagerly made excuse to get into conversation with them one afternoon in the writing-room.

"You have but just arrived?" repeated Miss Pritchard kindly when he had made that fact known.

The interest and wistfulness in his eyes appealed to her, seasoned traveler that she felt herself to be.

"Yes, I made up my mind it was the right time to come over. I 'd struck a run of good luck and could afford it; but I 'm not a bit prepared for what I 'm going to see, and that 's a big handicap. For instance, I don't know a thing about art. When I 'm in Rome, if I should run right up against Mr. Milo's Venus, I should n't know it. Never saw a copy that I know of. I might walk right past it and never be a bit the wiser."

There was a frank simplicity in the young fellow's manner that touched his listeners. They told him that Mr. Milo did not create the Venus so far as any one knows, and told him where to find it, and Edwina showed him Baedeker and explained to him how to delve for its facts. He listened gratefully to all they had to say, and appeared to anticipate with less doubt the novel experiences before him. Later, in the same room, his new friends were amused to observe a little incident that still further exhibited the young fellow's strangeness to his surroundings. A Frenchwoman wished to use the pen, and the young American, lingering idly at the writing-table, was in her way. She fluttered up to him and said volubly: "*Pardon! Voulez-vous avoir la bonté de me passer la plume?*"

The American raised his eyebrows and started back with a candid gesture. "You can search *me!*" he responded emphatically.

Eunice and Edwina did not remain long in Naples. The cabmen frightened them, the squalor repulsed them. One bright morning they were rowed out to the steamer Nixe, which was to take them to Capri. Vesuvius was smoking pensively, the gray vapor falling and trailing down the mountain side, and the passengers all stood on the deck looking back at Naples on its splendid curve, the hills full of foliage, and the gray arches.

"Good riddance to those brigandish cabmen!" said Miss Pritchard.

"And to their poor little bedecked ponies with the outriggers each side of their noses," added Edwina.

But Miss Pritchard had not long to dwell upon the gaudy fringes and brass ornaments of the Neapolitan ponies. The Mediterranean again proved inhospitable, and all poetry was speedily taken out of "sailing the Vesuvian bay." By the time Capri was reached Eunice was in no mood for pursuing the excursion as the other passengers were about to do, to the Blue Grotto.

"We shall be here several days. Surely we can go into it any time," she said, and Edwina agreed. So they stepped into the small boat which had come out from the Marina Grande to meet them; and this in itself was not too easy, for the sea was rough and they were obliged to wait until the boat rose to the top of the wave, as in the watery valley it was impossible to reach it. Edwina had just succeeded in assisting her cousin to enter safely when above the beating of the waves she heard a familiar voice.

"I can't think, Edward, how I can ever do it!"

"Drop, I tell you! Take that man's hand. Don't be all day about it!"

It was indeed the Remicks, and Miss Remick literally and involuntarily fell upon Eunice in a hysterical mixture of joy and fright.

"Who would ever have thought it!" she cried gladly.

"Humph!" grunted her brother, giving a lifeless hand to the Americans. "It seems we are n't the only fools in the world!"

"I 'm sure the crossing was very different to what it usually is," said Miss Remick apologetically.

"And very like our trip to St. Honorat," added Edwina, smiling at her sudden conceit that this southern sea objected to carrying the Remicks.

The Englishman folded his hands on his umbrella handle and rested his chin upon them. "When people voluntarily go in for this sort of thing, they don't deserve any sympathy," he remarked to the gray wall of rock toward which the boatmen began to pull.

"But I 've always been so keen to see Capri," said his sister, looking from one American to the other for support.

"It would n't do to be so near as Naples without coming over, certainly," said Miss Pritchard.

"The Blue Grotto is the chief feature," growled Mr. Remick. "You would n't go to it."

"But, Edward, I was too ill, was n't I? And we can go some other day, can't we?"

"Go if you like. I shan't. My word! Some people must always make two bites of a cherry."

Miss Remick's large face was grieved as that of a child, and she looked for comfort toward Edwina, who nodded. "We are going some day," said the girl, and the Englishwoman slowly smiled.

At the Marina Grande there was the usual press of more or less picturesque peasant women who seized upon all portable luggage, dividing it to carry to the carriage in order to present as many claims for centesimi as possible. Edwina could not avoid noticing how satisfied they were with Mr. Remick's largess, while they chattered resentfully at the increased quantity she bestowed. Some means of concealing our nationality would be much money in the traveling American's pocket.

Mr. Remick's voice seemed especially fitted to exclaim "Via!" in a manner to enforce obedience, and he soon cleared away the group of beggars and the carriage started. Upward it wound for half an hour, three of the tourists happy in the view of the bay, and the fourth looking straight before him.

"Have you decided on your hotel, Mr. Remick?" asked Edwina.

"Faraglioni. Always go there. The table 's beastly."

"Me brother 's bean here again and again," said Miss Remick. "It suits his tubes, and so he thought he 'd bring me over this time."

"Well, I don't think I 'll try that hotel on your recommendation," laughed Edwina.

"I never recommend a hotel," returned their amiable escort.

"Then I see it is of no use to catechise you," said the girl. She was glad not to be the invalid's sister, but she had some compassion on his mood after several hours spent with Miss Remick in a seasick condition.

Their carriage at last drew up in the stone-paved square from which footpaths lead to the villas, hotels, and pensions of the village. Saying "*Au revoir*" to the Remicks, Eunice and Edwina set off for one of the latter to which they had been recommended as a place where English was spoken. Its garden was attractive, and it was a disappointment to the travelers when the proprietor, a dapper little Italian with the air of a dancing master, shook his head and gestured deprecatingly when they requested two single rooms.

"In my dependencies I have them," he added, with a graceful, vague wave of the hand.

"At some distance, I suppose," said Miss Pritchard. "We should have to come here to meals." Her voice betrayed doubt.

"Ah!" His finger flew with a dramatic gesture to his lip; "but wait. This is weather. In the morning my servant carries your breakfast to you. For lunch and dinner I must ask" — an apologetic outspreading of hands finished.

The ladies murmured dissent. Again the persuasive finger flew to his lip. "Ha, listen! If it were Jenooary you would say to me, 'Giovanni, we cannot!' But look! It is weather!"

It was. One could not deny it while the azure bathed the white corners of the villas and dyed the bounding sea. Nevertheless they said "Giovanni, we cannot," and reluctantly departed.

"If you don't mind the Remicks I'll try the Faraglioni. Mr. Remick's familiarity here will be some help to us."

"Well, I suppose we shall live outdoors mainly, and it will be only a few days."

So to the Faraglioni they climbed through the narrow winding paths, and after one glimpse of the rambling old villa with its ancient garden where the roses clamber over white arbors and around pillars, a whole regiment of Remicks could not have discouraged them.

The only drawback to Italian gardens for Miss Pritchard were the numerous lizards. Her innate repugnance to those little creatures, whose bird-like heads seem wrongfully fettered to reptile bodies, was too strong to be overcome; and she declined to sit under the trellises unless Edwina was by as bodyguard; but thus protected she could see the small creatures slip over the low white wall or sun themselves on the baked stones, without fear.

Two days later the sea had quieted, and as they felt that Miss Remick was keeping an eye upon their movements with the Blue Grotto in view, Edwina suggested that they should not postpone the trip.

"Yes, let 's get it over," sighed Miss Pritchard. "It will be almost as bad as the Catacombs."

"And no Mr. Champion to call upon!" said Edwina.

"No. He is out of the question now."

"But what is there that you dread about it?" asked the girl.

"Why, what should I but the water — that wretched, humpy old ocean that never will keep still!"

"Oh!" Edwina said no more, but her own apprehensions were acute, although of a different nature. Her experiences with extortionate cabmen in Naples made her exceedingly shy, in her ignorance of the language, of risking similar unpleasantness in a small boat on the water; but she refrained from putting these fears into her companions' heads.

Miss Remick responded gladly to Edwina's invitation. "Me brother will go for a walk instead," she said; and indeed he left the hotel with them, and bidding them a curt farewell, took his way along the brow of the hill toward the Faraglioni rocks. Edwina knew how he would sit there, his hands crossed on his stick, looking before him as unmindful of the lavish wild flowers swinging their bells at his feet as of the rush of waters around the massive rock formations. She would have preferred to go with him and force these beauties upon his attention rather than to engineer the present expedition; but chiding herself for cowardice, she cheerfully led her companions through the windings of one of the narrow walled lanes which in

Capri do service for streets. Occasionally they met goats or a donkey, and as frequently a bundle of rags inclosing a beggar lay in their path.

Arrived at the *piazza*, they took a carriage to descend to the Marina. It was an ideal morning. The zigzag road leading farther up the mountain to the village of Anacapri looked alluring. Edwina smiled at her own reluctance. Everything seemed more attractive to her this morning than the Marina and its boatmen, with the lonely row of three-quarters of an hour in prospect.

"The sea looks quite calm, does n't it?" said Miss Remick, when they had arrived and were walking out on the dock.

"There are the Carabinieri twins, Edwina," said Miss Pritchard, glancing toward the inevitable pair of soldiers. "Can't they help you?" for she noticed that the girl was looking about undecidedly.

"They never know any French," was the despondent reply. "I never could see that they did anything but look pretty."

"Have you remarked how everything in Italy seems to be in pairs?" said Miss Remick, "especially in Rome? Of course, there 's Romulus and Remus, and Castor and Pollux, then the Carabinieri — and I hope it 's not wicked to say so, but there 's Peter and Paul everywhere."

Edwina's eyes were busily searching for the least brigandish countenance observable among the boatmen. The scowling, swarthy faces under the slouched caps were not encouraging. Just as her doubt was at its height a boat drew up to the platform out of which stepped a lady and gentleman. One of the rowers was of a different and attractive type. Impulsively Edwina accosted the lady in French. The stranger's command of the language was even less than her own, but she managed to learn that they had visited the Grotto and that they liked their boatman.

"What should one pay them?" asked the girl anxiously.

Unnoticed, the handsome young boatman who had attracted Edwina's attention had drawn near and was openly listening. As the lady had difficulty in formulating her reply, he interposed modestly with an easy bow and replied for her.

"*Vous parlez français!*" exclaimed Edwina in glad surprise.

"Yes, Mademoiselle."

"And English!" more joyously. The Italian's bright eyes and teeth gleamed with pleasure.

"Yes," he answered simply.

Volubly then the girl explained in her own dear native tongue that she could not speak Italian, and therefore did not know how to make her arrangements to go to the Blue Grotto.

"I will take care of you," said the young fellow.

He helped the ladies into the boat; but Edwina observed signs that raised her doubts.

"Are n't you coming with us?"

"I have just returned. I am not allowed. The others, they must take you."

Promptly Edwina rose. “Then I ’m not going. I ’d rather wait till to-morrow than not go with you.”

The sailor looked surprised. “Thank you, Madame!”

“I tell you I can’t speak Italian; but perhaps you are tired,” for the dew was on the boy’s broad forehead.

He made an expressive gesture of scorn. “I could row around the island; but I am not allowed. Wait, I ask.”

Turning, he spoke to the padrone, who was watching and frowning questioningly. At last the boatman turned back to Edwina. “He allows if you pay me extra.”

“How much?”

He shrugged his shoulder. “Whatever you like.”

“Very well. Come then. What is your name?”

“Luigi.”

The second boatman was barefooted and rough and stood behind Luigi, who in his canvas shoes and the pink shirt that fitted his broad shoulders looked like a young prince beside his fellows. The three ladies sat in the end of the boat, Luigi facing them, every movement full of grace as often during his talk he removed one brown hand from the long oar in the necessity for gesture. A few questions were all that were needed to set him to talking easily in a reposeful fashion. He had just served his time in the navy and was doing this work temporarily until he could find some business to settle upon. Military discipline explained the phenomena of his immaculate teeth and hands, and the muscular development of his shoulders and chest. With flashing looks and smiles he entertained his passengers with his biography. He was twenty-two years of age, and was one of eleven children, of whom "only the biggest was dead."

"I do not like this work. I wish to go England, yes; but I cannot go until I arrange my moth-er."

"With so many brothers and sisters, can't someone else take care of her?" asked Miss Pritchard.

"They are all mar-ri-ed but me. My brother Pietro mar-ri-ed a girl from Germania, and she died and remained two little boys. Yes. They are in Capri. Yes."

"But how did you happen to talk English?"

"A lady from Boston who is the master of a school was in Capri many summers. She buy me books and teach me. She had me to make promenades with her and correct me, yes."

That lingering, musical "yes" with which the speaker adorned his statements was one of the special charms which were swiftly and surely capturing his audience. Evidently it was usual for Luigi to find his way to the feminine heart. He proceeded to relate instances of kindness toward himself on the part of his officer's wife. She had used her influence to get him excused from a portion of his time of service, and on parting had "made him a gold pin!"

Altogether this young spirit of Italy was one of those beings who occasionally give one patience with the romantic novelist's inventions. Miss Pritchard said afterward that even despite his careful arrangement of cushions at her back she held out very well against him until he took from his pocket a snow-white handkerchief to wipe his streaming brow. This crowning touch of cleanliness in Southern Italy caused her to capitulate wholly. She leaned toward Edwina and whispered: "I want to send his mother a present."

The heavy boat slid through the intensely blue water, beneath sheer gray crags hundreds of feet in height. Vesuvius wore a soft bouquet of smoke. There was only a light breeze, so neither Miss Remick nor Miss Pritchard felt any drawback to the trip, while Edwina, relieved of her vague terrors, leaned back in her place and gave herself up to enjoyment. In their ignorance they had supposed that this boat could take them inside the Grotto; but when they reached its low arch, a couple of small skiffs approached to take them aboard. Miss Remick begged to be allowed to have a companion in the enterprise; so she and Miss Pritchard, with Luigi's assistance, entered one of the small boats and Edwina the other.

"I do believe we 've to lie down in this," said Miss Remick, appalled.

"Yes, Madame," said Luigi.

Laboriously the Englishwoman abased her portly person, while slim little Eunice easily followed her example, though inwardly she was as agitated as the unquiet water which here restlessly rose and fell against the rock.

"How ever can we get through such a tiny place?" exclaimed Miss Remick, lifting her head to gaze again upon the low arch which at the rising wave was almost completely hidden.

Miss Pritchard's head next came appprehensively above the gunwale. "Ned, do you think we'd better try it?" she called. "The waves are so big, — really this is enough to see, and it's against my better" —

"*A bas!*" warned her boatman, whose swarthy face was scowling.

As this exclamation only made Miss Pritchard struggle up higher, Miss Remick cried warningly!

"Down! he says, down! We'll be dashed against the rock!"

Eunice ducked and closed her eyes, prepared for any fate. The beautiful malicious waves were tossing their little cockle shell, and Miss Remick was murmuring broken ejaculations as to Edward and the pity it was that he was n't here to protect them, although his tubes never would permit him to lie so flat, when the boatman pushed near the arch and, taking advantage of the dropping of the wave, seized the rope and with a vigorous pull shot their little craft out of the bright sunshine into the dusky Grotto.

Eunice opened her eyes at the jerk and peered around in surprise. Like many another, she had viewed the vivid blue pictures of this curious spot until her expectation had been of being ushered into the heart of a transparent turquoise. Instead, from the sudden contrast with the outer world, all was blackness except the quivering light in the water. A minute's stay accustomed the eyes, and then that translucent, liquid, silvery blue in which their boat floated grew wonderful to see, and gradually the stalactites of the arching roof became perceptible.

When Edwina's boat came in they talked to one another, and their voices resounded and reëchoed strangely. After paddling about aimlessly for a minute or two, Miss Remick's boatman called attention to the boys in white bathing dress who stood on a rock ready to dive for the consideration of a lira. He spoke in French, and Miss Remick informed him that she had no money. He persisted, and she replied, "Mademoiselle a l'argong," so the interest of both the sailors became centred in Edwina. Her boatman explained to her also in French about the boys, and insisted, in spite of the girl's declaration that she did not care to see the swimming, that she give them a lira.

Apparently he was determined not to move until she complied. There was no one in the echoing grotto but themselves. They were absolutely helpless to get out until their boatmen should elect. The girl congratulated herself that outside in the sunshine waited Luigi, a link to the world. She gave one look at the descendant of pirates, who was determined upon money, and then took out her purse. It happened to be the one containing paper, so she then found her coin purse and, taking therefrom a lira, she threw it into the water, supposing that the boys wished to dive for it as they had done in the harbor at Naples. But the boatman volubly explained that that was impossible here. She must hand the boy a lira, and then he would swim. When she had found a second coin and complied, he turned his boat in such a manner as to cut off the view of Miss Pritchard and Miss Remick, saying that as they had paid nothing they must not see. They did not complain, their chief and only anxiety being to get out of this watery dungeon with its quivering lights and robber crew.

The short swim concluded, a few more minutes were passed in viewing the wonderful lights, and then the party expressed their wish to leave the Grotto. Miss Pritchard's boatman, having slight interest in his moneyless passengers, obediently turned toward the entrance, and they felt a certain relief in his lazy obedience, as if he might have been expected to decline; and their boat was nearly ready to shoot beneath the arch when a cry from Edwina resounded through the cavern. She had asked her sailor to follow the others, and instead of doing so he had begun to row toward a remote and dark corner at the opposite side of the Grotto. Edwina trembled in every limb with vague terror. Wait, *wait*, cousin Eunice ! " she shouted.

"*Courage, Mademoiselle, ayez courage*," said her boatman in a low voice.

Miss Pritchard turned with a start at her child's cry. "Tell him to wait — tell him to stop!" she said to Miss Remick.

"*Arretez! arretez!*" cried the latter, and their man paused.

Even then Edwina's boatman persisted in his course. In still greater fright she called to her cousin, and again her boatman exhorted, "*Courage, Mademoiselle, courage.*"

Miss Pritchard began crying, "Edwina, come! Come at once!" So the sailor turned, and observing that the other boat was waiting, and hearing the frantic cries, he abandoned whatever designs he may have had to draw something more from those two attractive purses of Mademoiselle, and at last followed the other boat. Once again they all regained the light of day, and Luigi's white cap and pink shirt formed a welcome landmark in the blue. His reposeful speech sounded more than ever musical as he helped his passengers back into the large boat.

Edwina was so much shaken that her hands trembled almost uncontrollably as she opened her purse to pay the Grotto boatmen, who watched her every movement greedily. She knew that she should break down if she made any comment on the fright the man had given her, so she merely paid them and added a generous *pour boire*, the quicker to escape their neighborhood: but her tactics were unsuccessful. A storm of dissatisfied Italian broke from her own boatman, though the other was silent.

"Supposing now that we had come with common sailors only," she said to herself.

She looked at Luigi, who immediately came forward. "What did you give him?" he asked, and the girl told him.

Luigi nodded and shrugged; the man still chattered. "Give him ten centesimi," he said, and Edwina obeyed. Luigi laughed at the voluble sailor, and as he pushed away chaffed him with a fun that was careless of the dark looks cast after their retreating boat.

By common consent the ladies did not refer to anything disagreeable on the homeward way. They preferred to ask Luigi about his mother and the little tobacco shop which he said she prayed to be allowed to keep, for she should be sick if they would not allow her to work. The Grotto boatman would have liked the coin Miss Pritchard sent that moth-er. Luigi pronounced the first syllable as if it were the word moth. And the padrone was satisfied with Edwina's reward for allowing Luigi to go with them. There are some benefits for which money cannot pay.

CHAPTER XVI

FLYING TRIPS

When Miss Remick that night related to her brother the experiences of their excursion, Edwina expected the latter to utter some harsh reproach. Instead he turned and looked squarely at her, contrary to custom.

"My word! I'd like to have been there," he said threateningly.

"No doubt a man's presence would have altered their behavior," she answered.

"It was so unfortunate that I had to prevent our going with the large company the day we arrived," said Miss Pritchard, who shuddered every time she remembered Edwina's cry in the Grotto.

"Oh, 'All's well that ends well,'" said the girl, who nevertheless expected to dream of the episode. "We've seen the Blue Grotto and — Luigi!"

"That nice clean boy!" exclaimed Eunice pensively. "He was the only thing that kept me from jumping overboard when I saw that rascal rowing off with you in the black distance."

"I would like to know what he had in his mind," said Edwina. "Luigi laughed at him and teased him as if he were n't anybody to be afraid of."

"Oh, it was only some form of begging he was after," growled Mr. Remick, "but deuced unpleasant. My word! I'd like the kicking of him!"

A few days at Capri, intoxicating rambles among the rocks and wild flowers, an excursion by donkeys to the palace of Tiberius, during which the Remicks' "walk [or rather, ride] and conversation" nearly incapacitated their American friends from sitting their animals, and then the party left the mountain island. Luigi was on the dock at the hour of their departure and went out with them in the small boat to the Nixe, and helped carry their luggage on board. Their kindness and interest had won his heart, and the more they saw of the simple dignity and natural charm of his manner, the more he pleased them.

"I would like to go away, yes," he said as they all stood together on the deck of the large steamer. "It is nothing for me in Capri; but I have not yet arranged my moth-er. She send her thanks — a great deal — to the lady." He brought his heels together and took off his cap to Eunice.

"You must say good-by to her for us," returned Miss Pritchard. "Here is an envelope with my name and address, Luigi, and Miss Wilder will give you one of hers, so you will not forget us, for we shall remember you with a great deal of pleasure."

The Italian's olive cheek flushed and he bowed low again, then took from his pocket his card. It read "Sabelli Luigi," and he added the address:

"Marina Grande, Isola di Capri," and handed it to Miss Pritchard, but looked at Edwina.

While the five stood thus, another small boat approached the steamer.

"It is the Grand Duke, yes," said Luigi; and the eyes of the party became fixed on the approaching craft. They had seen the Duke of Hesse several times during the last few days, his Highness' villa being near the Faraglioni. "I knew that they go to-day. I like go to England. The Grand Duke would take me in his suite, but I could not."

The boat drew near. It was half-full of roses, and among the blossoms sat the Duke and Duchess, a wholesome, attractive young couple, with the little Princess Elizabeth and various of their suite. They entered the steamer by a passage opposite the one employed for the general traveler, and repaired to a portion of the upper deck which had been railed off for them.

"You have had something to do for the Duke, then?" said Mr. Remick to the Italian.

"I row his boat, yes."

Miss Remick eagerly asked Luigi to verify the chief members of the party, who interested her no more than they did the Americans. Edwina while on the island had been told how carefully consideration for the feelings of others had been instilled by her parents into the little five-year-old princess, whose nurse took her one day to visit at some house where the child played a while with a cat. When they came away the little girl put her hand to her temple, where a deep scratch from a claw was bleeding. "Why did n't you tell me the cat had hurt you?" asked the nurse anxiously. "I could n't without their hearing me," replied the little princess, for whom *noblesse oblige* already had a meaning.

Luigi replied courteously to all the questions of the travelers concerning the ducal party, one of whom was a tall Englishman who was the Duke's constant companion. This individual caught sight of Luigi, and immediately advanced to him. The travelers retreated to their seats; the Italian brought his heels together and removed his cap.

"Well, we 're off," said the personage heartily, after exchanging greetings.

"Is the Grand Duke glad to go?"

"No indeed; he 's sorry. We 're all sorry. We may come back in August. Shall you be here then?"

"I do not know."

"Do you think of going away before that time?"

"I cannot tell."

"Shall you stay in Capri for a while, any way?"

"I cannot say."

The catechism proceeded for some time, to the amusement of the Americans; the repose and simplicity of Luigi's manner seeming unchangeable by circumstances. Evidently the boy's charm had worked in this case also, for the great man of a great man shook hands with him cordially at parting, and then Luigi returned to the Americans.

Edwina asked him concerning some of the street songs she had been hearing, and he told her about them, meanwhile looking from time to time to see if the last boat were ready to return to the Marina.

Mr. Remick gave the word at last. "Now, then, Luigi, unless you wish to go to Sorrento."

The Italian, his cap off, shook hands with his friends, and springing to the stairway, slid and vaulted over the rail and dropped into the small boat, more like a bit of thistledown than a man.

"My word! The boy 's half-monkey!" said Mr. Remick.

"No," laughed Eunice. "Only wholly sailor." She and Edwina let their handkerchiefs float toward the upright figure in the boat, who was waving one to them as white as that which had originally won Eunice's heart.

"That young man has associated all his life with nice people," declared Miss Pritchard.

"Humph!" responded Mr. Remick. "If every woman who comes to Capri takes a hand in spoiling him, that modest air of his won't last long."

Arrived at Sorrento, it was a strange sight to see the peasant women carry trunks on their heads up the cliff side, the flights of hundreds of steps proving severe exertion to unladen tourists. The hotel our travelers selected had a charming terrace paved with blue tiles and shady with plum-trees. They sat there after dinner in reclining chairs, the air faintly permeated with orange blossoms.

Vesuvius, Capri, and Ischia lay before them in the fine sunset.

Edwina was thinking, as always when off duty, of Champion. Perhaps she sent her cousin a mind-wave, for in a minute Eunice spoke.

"I wonder if I could give Mr. Champion the least idea of what we are seeing? It would be something to write about if I could."

"He has been here," said Edwina. "It would be enough simply to tell him where we are."

Miss Remick turned toward the speaker. "We must see the tarantella this evening, must n't we? You are n't forgetting, I hope."

"Are you coming with us, Mr. Remick?" asked Edwina.

The old gentleman was sitting in his usual posture, staring through the enchanting beauty of the bay at whatever it was his gaze always fixed upon.

"It 's the same thing, I dare say. I saw it five years ago."

"Then don't disturb yourself. We will take care of Miss Remick. Cousin Eunice and I should go by ourselves were we here alone."

But when they started, Mr. Remick followed, and Edwina fell back and walked with him, as if no other plan had been thought of. Supposing this tall form were another — but she must not consider that.

"Did you ever see anything less American than this?" she asked, as they moved through the narrow, deserted windings of the streets, boxed in with irregular old houses. "Oh, I forgot. You don't know America. Well, is n't it just like a stage setting — like an old picture?"

"Yes, these Italian villages are always reminding one of pictures, of course. Artists have been at them for generations."

"But it reminds me more of grand opera. I feel if I only opened my mouth right here and tried to sing, my voice would sound like Emma Eames'!"

"I dare say you 'd only alarm the watch."

The girl laughed. "I shan't sing without more urging than that. You need n't expect it."

"I was n't urging you," said the Englishman.

"No — so I understood."

"Ow!"

"But, I can tell you, I am full of songs, — full to the brim of Italian street songs that we have heard at Naples and Capri and here. I hummed one or two to Luigi, and he told me their names and says he will write me the words of one of them; and to-night I heard a waiter whistling one after dinner, and I rushed at the poor man and asked him what it was, and that pretty little daughter of the landlord came to the rescue. 'You do not know it, Maria Mari?' she said. 'I will make you hear it on the mandolin.' And so she did. Perhaps you heard her."

"Yes, I heard her."

"Wasn't it pretty?"

"Rather neat, I thought."

Arrived at the Tramontane hotel, where the tarantella was danced, to Edwina's great pleasure the company gave several of the characteristic songs that had begun to haunt her, and she expressed her enthusiasm to Mr. Remick with as much abandon as if he had been another schoolgirl. That this novel and extraordinary treatment did not displease the invalid was proved next morning, when, returning from a stroll in the village, he presented Edwina with a rolled bundle, whose contents proved to be a collection of the popular songs of the day. Her surprise and pleasure were so genuine that he looked down into her clear young eyes with a certain brightness in his own.

"I only wish I could hear you play them," he said, with such an approach to graciousness that his ever-loyal sister beamed upon him with pride and admiration.

That evening, when they returned from seeing the dance through the narrow old streets to their hotel, they found their terrace enchanting. Venus in a starry sky was casting a track of light across the water, and an occasional lurid glow brightened the smoke ever rising from Vesuvius; but the spot was disenchanted for Miss Pritchard the following morning when an all-pervasive bell clanged near her window before five o'clock, and continued the performance at intervals of fifteen minutes. The clamor disturbed even Edwina's young dreams, and she was prepared for Eunice's prayer for a hasty departure.

"When I get home," said Miss Pritchard, "I'm going to ask to have 'Ring the bells of Heaven' struck out of the hymn book. Do let me hope for peace above!"

"We might substitute 'Ring the bells of Hades,'" suggested Edwina. "I think a gospel song on that text would make you abandon all your vices, little Eunice."

"I'm sure of it!" returned Miss Pritchard devoutly. "Just supposing Baedeker would indicate in every town which hotel was least disturbed by bells and early street noises. It would make the fortune of certain landlords, and make coming to Europe a dream of pleasure. Ned, I think the Remicks want to take our drive with us."

"I've been weighing that in my mind; and do you know, I'm such a coward about Italian drivers, I should n't be sorry to have them. Mr. Remick is an experienced traveler, after all."

So when later that morning the old gentleman brought her the music, Edwina found it the easier to discuss with him their prospective trip. It being discovered that the luggage of four would seriously over-weight one vehicle, it turned out that the party set forth in two landaus, to each of which were harnessed three horses.

The landlord and his daughter kissed the travelers' hands in the graceful Italian fashion and wished them "*Bon voyage*," and in the inevitable sunshine the landaus rolled away. Miss Pritchard had politely suggested that the Remicks' carriage take precedence in case of dust being raised which otherwise might irritate the invalid's "tubes." Mr. Remick expressed laconically his appreciation of her thoughtfulness and accepted the arrangement. With all his faults, he had not the ordinary ones of the chronic invalid. He never talked of his aches and pains, never ostensibly arranged for his own comfort or relief, but grimly and stolidly pursued the path of life as one who asks no favors of Fortune nor expects any.

Eunice and Edwina could not forbear laughing a little over the probable good cheer inside the forward carriage. "I only hope they won't ask to make any exchange of companions," said Eunice. "That good soul, Miss Remick, is beginning to understand that you have charms to soothe Brer B'ar's savage breast, and what shall we do if she asks to change part of the way?"

"Oh, we can't!" exclaimed Edwina. "I suspect you are going to be more severely attacked by poetry than in Wales. I can't have such a ball and chain attached to your flights as Miss Remick would be. There are limits to good nature."

Edwina had been assured by a German in Capri that this famous drive from Sorrento to Amalfi and Salerno was "incomparable for beauty in the whole world." The orange and lemon groves of Sorrento seemed illimitable to our travelers, and for an hour their carriage wound and rose inland until at last they came again into a road on the brink of the peacock sea. Beside it rose volcanic mountains, and it wound so abruptly and constantly that the changing vistas kept busy the eyes and imagination of these beauty worshipers. Three and a half hours' driving brought them to Amalfi, where they stopped at the Hotel Syrene on the edge of the town. The heavy tide surged at the base of the hospitable little house and added to its charms of cleanliness and quiet. Moreover, being a trifle remote is in favor of a hostelry in this region, for it is evident that Italian villages, like other effective pictures, were never intended to be smelled of.

They all stayed a few days at Amalfi. They drove to lofty Ravello, going slowly up beside the Valley of the Mills and rejoicing in the views of its river and cascades. The universal drawback to Italian paradises, the beggars, were not especially touching during these days. It is understood among them that any means will suffice to extract soldi from tourists if they are of a giving spirit. The Italian babies beg before they can speak plainly. A healthy mite clad in one garment holds up a tiny hand and says, "Tholdi, Thignora!" quite as early as an American infant could enunciate "Mamma" and "Papa." Often our travelers were amused to observe a baby in a second story window look down upon them as they drove by and make the interrogative as well as imperative sign which signified demand. The little closed hand would go up, with one finger raised. It was eloquent pantomime, and meant "One soldo," the trifling fact of the impossibility of transferring the coin from the moving carriage to the upper floor of the house not in the least affecting the gesture which followed mechanically on the recognition of a tourist. The energy and persistency of the athletic little beggars was surprising. Sometimes they ran for miles beside the carriage, their excuse at one time being the wish to sell a small wilted nosegay, at another the offering of an unfortunate bird which, seized by the feet, ineffectually flapped its wings until, utterly rejected, it was folded back into its prison beneath a boy's jacket.

"Indeed I won't buy the poor little thing," said Edwina indignantly. "It would only encourage them to go and catch another immediately."

Another ruse adopted by a vigorous little fellow was to throw a world of pathos into his beautiful eyes and while racing beside the carriage to open his jacket and exhibit his plump olive body. The day was warm, and his comfortable scarcity of apparel elicited a smile, but no soldi. Nevertheless there were many occasions which won their loose coin, and at a journey's end they never had a copper left. The temptation to get rid of blots on that grand and uplifting scenery is too strong for rules of conduct.

On their last morning in Amalfi Mr. Remick declined to mount to the Hotel of the Capuchins, but the others took the long flights of stone steps deliberately, in consideration of Miss Remick's avoirdupois. A reason which influenced Eunice to make haste as slowly as any one pleased was the number of lizards which scurried up and down and to right and left on the baked steps as they ascended to the old monastery. The garden, when they reached it, proved worthy of all effort, and they strolled happily between its white columns where rich vines screen one from the sun, and looked down, down, on the resplendent sea, all color and light and sparkle. Miss Remick insisted on measuring the clumps of daisies loaded with blossoms which grew like little trees from a thick trunk. Finding them six yards in circumference, she jotted down the fact in a small note-book, saying that dear Edward would be so interested.

After lunch that day the party set forth for Salerno. The crucial moment which Miss Pritchard had apprehended arrived. Miss Remick looked slowly around before they entered the carriages. "How would it be to change this afternoon," she suggested, "and let Miss Wilder ride with me brother?"

Edwina had prepared for this emergency a little statement of her cousin's timidity in driving, but she was not called upon to use it. Mr. Remick waved his hand impatiently to his sister. "Get in," he said. "I'll not victimize Miss Wilder. You know very well I'm silent as a post in a carriage."

"To be sure, Edward. Talking in any noise does distress your tubes, does n't it? Now, I 'm never so lively as when driving. I must talk."

"Humph! Well, I 'm deaf as a post too when I want to be; so it 's all right. I don't hear anything you say;" with which brotherly reassurance he followed her into the landau, and the Americans mounted to their own, exulting over the escaped peril.

"What sort of things do you suppose she says all the time?" exclaimed Eunice. "Think of three or four hours of one of nature's chiefest panoramas, with the tide of the Mediterranean on one side and her talk on the other! I should jump out, — I know I should!"

But the roll of music, flattened so nicely in Edwina's suit case, was still making her heart unusually tender toward Mr. Remick. That Saturday evening in Salerno the street was nearly equal to a carnival in crowd and gayety. Edwina proposed to Mr. Remick that they study human nature abroad rather than attempt the impossible in endeavoring to sleep before midnight; and he actually sallied forth with her on the crowded Quai and scowled forbiddingly at the handsome officers who stared approvingly at the tall, fair American girl, while she chatted to him gayly.

His responses were mostly confined to "Really!" "I dare say!" "My word!" "Ow!" but they served to prove that in this case the old gentleman did not take refuge in deafness; and he vouchsafed afterward to his sister that no one could be dull where Miss Wilder was.

The following morning a very short view of the Cathedral sufficed our party, while the evil smells of the inland streets caused them to hasten with alacrity to the station to take the train for Pæstum.

How still, how clear and lovely was that Sunday morning at Pæstum, — late enough in the season to have let the tide of tourists sweep by and on! Leaving the train, the quartette strolled out to the green field where stand the ruined temples by the sea. Between their columns gleamed the green water, and the summit of each ancient pillar had become a natural hanging basket, brimming over with vines and flowers that waved softly beneath the cloudless sky. They were alone but for a few persistent children, whom bribes at last induced to leave them in peace.

The altars and steps of the temples offered an embarrassment of riches in the way of seats and stony couches where one might dream, level with the responsive, sighing tide. "I should like to come here by moonlight with" — thought Edwina, so intently that she feared for a moment she might have spoken. She glanced about her furtively. Her companions were absorbed, each one separately. She gave a little sigh of thankfulness and sank down on the stone at the foot of a pillar. "It is nearly time for me to write to him," she reflected with a wave of joy.

A couple of days afterward at Pompeii, when Miss Pritchard had yielded to Miss Remick's desire to make a second visit to the ruins, Edwina seized her opportunity.

My Dear [she wrote]: I have as many things as ever to thank you for, first for writing the little note to cousin Eunice at Capri. I read between its lines, and I assure you I always shall, and, as I promised, will write you twice every month until the circumstances change. Your generosity in yielding to my wishes makes me [here the writer bit her pen for a hesitating minute; finally she continued] I must n't say one half the things to you that are in my mind, — no, in my heart; for I am afraid they will make you answer me. Cousin Eunice is so happy, I want to forget that Edwina Wilder has any wishes until we get on the ship to go home. Don't you think if I make my letters merely friendly and commonplace, it will be easier for you? If so, please say in your next to cousin Eunice that the weather is pleasant. But if you wish me to express more, and are sure you will keep your part of the compact, just mention that the weather is bad, and I shall understand. It hurts me to keep a secret from cousin Eunice, but it would hurt worse to cloud this festive time she is having after such long dull years of loneliness. One hint, and all my care would go for nothing. Remember, "Of the unspoken word you are master. The spoken word is master of you." But what a prosy friend you will consider me!

How I wish you were here! That is what I think in each new place; and yet I would n't have you come for anything. Yesterday we went through the strange resurrected city with its miniature houses. It is in keeping with our usual good fortune that Vesuvius is in eruption. The rocks that are flying in the air keep up a sullen booming as of artillery. The noise added considerable realism to going through the ruins yesterday. It was as if the mountain were saying: "I can do it again if I like." When evening came we went down the road in the moonlight to a spot where the view was unobstructed, and the sight was really fearful and wonderful. The hotel proprietor was with us, and he bade us remember that the stones we saw rising were in reality large rocks. The crater measures four hundred and fifty feet across, and it was alive with flame, while these red-hot rocks flew up toward the sky in a fountain and with a sound of cannonading as they struck together and fell apart in streams of fire. The Remicks are with us, and Miss Remick concluded that London was a very nice, safe place. Nevertheless she and cousin Eunice have gone among the ruins again to-day, giving me blessed time to write a word to you.

I believe cousin Eunice told you of our handsome Italian boy, Luigi, who interested us so much at Capri. We have both written him a word. The picture post-cards make such an easy way of sending a message. You have taken the drive we did, so I need n't say anything about it except that the weather was good. Your memory will do the rest. I wished for you every minute — but that is one of the things I am not to say, unless you are having unpleasant weather!

Keep well and happy until I write again.

[The girl paused once more to meditate upon the form of ending to her epistle. She considered all the conventional and friendly methods, and one by one her heart pronounced against them. Was it not ungenerous to demand Champion's silence, and then give him less than would satisfy him if he could claim his rights? She clasped both hands over her rosy cheeks and looked seriously at the written page. "If I cannot marry him I shall marry no one, so why not?" she asked herself, then with steady hand signed:]

Your EDWINA.

She had addressed and stamped the envelope when Miss Pritchard and her friend entered the room. She slid the letter beneath some paper. Mr. Remick came in and stood about a while listening to their talk, then started forth, announcing his intention of taking a walk. The girl followed him into the hall.

"Ned, I have n't told you about this new house we found," called Eunice.

"Yes, I 'm coming right back;" then softly accosting Mr. Remick: "Would you mind mailing this letter as you go out?"

Mr. Remick regarded the envelope. "Doing what? What is it you wish?"

"Oh, just mail it!" said the girl hurriedly. "But never mind, if you're not going that way." She slipped the missive back into the folds of her dress.

"Post it, do you mean?" Why could n't you say so, then? Give it me; I'll post it, certainly." So this strange Cupid's messenger stalked off with the precious bit of paper, and Edwina returned with a beating heart to listen to tales of Pompeian pottery.

CHAPTER XVII

FAREWELL TO ITALY

The Remicks continued with their American friends as far as Florence, and they all found rooms on the Lung Arno, and spent one week together in this jewel casket of a city before the English people said farewell. Miss Remick shed a few tears at parting.

"It 's very tiresome growing fond of people and then never seeing them again," she said.

"But how can we ever be sure of that?" Miss Pritchard reminded her. "We thought we had parted in Cannes, you remember, and see what a long, pleasant trip we have had together."

Miss Remick wiped her eyes, but shook her head. "Me brother's tubes will never permit him to go to the States; but if you should come to England again you 'll not forget us, will you?"

"We shall not forget you in any case," said Edwina, whose smooth hand was clasping Mr. Remick's wooden fingers as she spoke. "I shall think of you every time I play those songs, and I hope you may grow stronger very soon," she added, looking up at him.

"Ay, hope is a good thing," responded Mr.

Remick stoically. "You 'll let us know when you get to the other side, I dare say."

"I shall write to you immediately," answered the girl.

A little later Eunice and Edwina were again alone, and rejoicing as usual in this independence.

Florence was enchanting in the latter part of May. The river was still full from profuse rains, the cypresses dark and slender on the heights, and the irregular old cream-colored houses made graceful sky-lines. Edwina drove with Eunice beneath the giant trees of the Cascine and listened to the wild melody of the black-caps, and strolled with her in the Boboli Gardens, where bird-songs fluted through the leafy glades. She took her cousin up through rose-laden roads to Fiesole, and exulted with her over the speckless greenness of foliage and the breadth of views.

In return Eunice accompanied Edwina on pilgrimages to see fifteenth century frescoes, faded and inaccessible except by putting one's neck to the torture, and kept her opinion of them to herself. They took plenty of time for the galleries, where Eunice felt no need of Symonds, Berenson, or any one else to assist her in selecting the pictures really worth seeing, and having chosen her favorites, held to them loyally, with no interest as to whether they were lacking in a dimension. Edwina pointed out to her in Santa Maria Novella a Madonna and Child of Cimabue, and read to her what was said of the utter joy in its beauty which greeted its completion; how the populace had borne the picture through the streets with public rejoicings, and told her that the name of that street to this day is "The Way of Gladness." Miss Pritchard only shook her head and clicked her tongue as she gazed at the crooked face and long fingers of the Virgin. "Were n't they easily pleased!" she said.

Eunice soon received another letter from Howard Champion. He was at Innsbruck now, and had been taking some interesting pedestrian trips in the bracing air. Miss Pritchard, her eye-glasses well down on her nose, skimmed through the letter in silence, while Edwina sat near doing some mending and putting in staggering stitches while she waited, which would all have to be ripped out.

"Why, the poor fellow is having the most awful weather!" said Eunice at last, still reading. Edwina pricked her finger. "Why — I never heard anything like it! It 's unsafe for him to walk in such a place! Such furious hailstorms might cause landslides in such a mountainous region! And how strange to have thunder and lightning at the same time. Well, well, I don't wonder it 's depressing. Listen: 'Weather does n't usually affect me, but this excessive riot of the elements gets on my nerves, to quote Miss Remick. I actually feel as if some compensation were due me.' He hopes we 're enjoying ourselves. Here it is," holding the sheet across to Edwina, who took it with an eager hand. "Dear me," sighed Miss Pritchard, "I wish I could write as good a letter as he does. By the way, Ned, you 've quite given up writing of late. I don't see why you should n't answer this instead of my doing it. It is such a cross for me to write a letter."

The girl did not answer. One cheek leaned in her hand as she read, and that volume between the lines so filled her consciousness that she did not trust herself to speak.

"I shall look in the papers and see if I can find something about those storms," pursued Eunice. "It must have been a perfect convulsion of nature up there. Had n't you just as lief write him a little note, Ned?"

"I 'd rather you did it, if you don't mind. I was planning to write a number of letters to-morrow. I have neglected my friends a good while, and now we shall have to write Luigi too. Here is an epistle from him to us both." Edwina laughed, glad of an outlet for her emotion. "You might read it aloud. It was addressed to me, so I opened it; but I wonder if he thinks my last name came first on the envelope, just as his does on his card!"

Eunice took the closely-written sheet of paper and read as follows: —

DEARS MY, — Very glad to received your kind letter from Amalfi, and very sorry that have n't been there with you. Do you tell me what have seen the Tarantella at Sorrento, and many other things. I send you the song written, but of course am I not the clevverest of the language in English.

Dear Miss Edwina and Mrs. Eunice, I write you both because I saw also you both are kind. It is very sad for me to remain in Capri without English friends. Of course I have known you, and now you are run away and who know when we shall see again!

Dears mine, the fourteenth is in Capri a grand fest, and many people come in Capri. I should have had you also with me.

I am glad that you are happy to see all, and well. Also my mother she is well, thank you very much what want know about her. Thank you also that both are sitting to write to me, much obliged to you; but Luigi will not forget the friends what he has known.

Dear Wilder, I wrote you a post card and also to Mrs. Eunice, for Luigi should never like to leave his friends without writting. Don't forgetten to write me soon as possible, that I expect your letter. Miss Edwina said that both were sitting to read, but I am alone to think of you, is indeed. Am I very glad if you will understand the song, and I will just remain like that with kindly reguards to both, with good salute and prosperity.

So Miss Edwina and Mrs. Pritchard, with the best respect a shake hands,

Your subordinate

S. Luigi.

On the last page of the sheet were the lines of the song. Luigi had headed these:

TRADUCTION.

Open the window,
Let me smooth (plane) your hair.
How much sleep that I lose for you,
Don't found a hour of peace,
The night I make a day ever.
Open little bit of the window,
With the little hand a sign to me she make.
Sound the gitar,
My lady she wake up,
A beautiful serenade let her hear (sentire).
In the middle of these little garden
A bed with heap of roses have I make for you.
Come, that the night is sweet,
The sky that is a mantle,
You sleep and I sing
The lullaby side (by) you.
The night is quite (serene) after the storm,
And the air fresh appear already.

In tiny script at the bottom of the page were written the words, "Addio, Wilder. Addio to Mrs. Eunice."

In another fortnight Eunice and Edwina were listening to the songs on the lagoons in Venice. When Miss Pritchard made the appalling discovery that within the confines of this poetical city night begins in the small hours and ends before they are half-grown, she relinquished a large, fine room on the Grand Canal to Edwina and fled to an attic chamber looking on the garden and the stars. After they had come in from their evening ride in a gondola the girl would sit in her window and listen to the untiring music in the lantern-lighted boats and watch the mysterious red and green reflections in the water as far up and down as the eye could reach, and best of all, the quivering grays that trembled in the lagoon beneath the saints and angels on the Church of Santa Maria della Salute, which was straight across from her balcony. A certain letter that she wrote from there must have melted all the hail in the Tyrol.

As soon as Eunice proved that she had found a place where she could sleep, she gave herself up to the delights of this Queen of the Adriatic. What a rest it was never to hear the crack of a whip or to see an ill-treated animal! What a luxury to call a gondola instead of a cab and float about to the churches and galleries!

As everywhere, Eunice and Edwina had each her favorite pastime. The former's was decidedly feeding the pigeons in the piazza, and when finally persuaded therefrom in the interests of art or hunger she would purchase a last paper of "*blé pour les pigeons*" and, trailing the contents after her, would succeed as well as the Pied Piper of Hamelin in attracting a procession of small followers. Edwina's delight was to add hers to the concourse of gondolas which by night made a black platform across the Grand Canal surrounding some favorite serenade-boat, where the big dramatic voices so common in Italy made amusing the remembrance of many feeble pipes carefully nurtured and cultivated at home. Thus evening after evening in the dusk of the lagoon, a crowd of glinting, polished battle-axes rose and fell on the rhythmic waves under a yellow moon, while the full voices vibrated down the water ways, accompanying Edwina's dreams.

Miss Pritchard was not slow to find the public garden, vocal as a cage of singing birds, and delighting her with its loaded rose-trees twenty feet in height. Her thrifty New England sense was offended by the peeling frescoes on the old weather-beaten palaces, that look in their blackness as if snowed upon in patches; but she soon found that Edwina considered it heresy to observe anything except their rich carvings; and if in a narrow liquid street an undeniably bad odor assailed her, she learned to swallow her objections and wait for the fresh salt breeze which as soon as they emerged into the Grand Canal would sweep in from the sea, filling the red sails and fluttering the gondoliers' ribbons. She liked to wander about the city through the narrow alleys, or where the plate glass windows come down to one's feet in the streets devoid of vehicles. The glitter of the piazza of St. Mark's at night, its rich shop windows dazzlingly lighted, quite intoxicated Eunice, who would have spent the remainder of their letter of credit among them if Edwina would have allowed it.

Their evening usually ended with an ice at Florian's and watching the changing crowds who listened to the orchestra in the "open air ball-room" of the piazza; and when the time came for them reluctantly to resume their journeyings, they found that no spot had held them with such a potent spell as Venice. With their *quattro* pieces of hand-luggage they entered a gondola, and for the last time stole around the liquid windings, past battered, peeling walls and stately palaces to the Stazione. Eunice looked solemnly at swaying vines and graceful bridges.

"Cheer up," said Edwina. "You will come back again."

"Never!" returned Miss Pritchard tragically. "I'm an old woman, Ned."

"You're a blessed little goose," laughed the girl irreverently; and the gondolier hoped it was the merry one who was going to pay him, and not the lady whose grief might make her absent-minded.

Eunice did cheer up that very evening as they stood together by the cathedral at Milan. The sky was still blue, although the sun had set, and as Eunice and Edwina approached the vast building, its beauty was unearthly, the hundreds of snowy spires seeming too airy to be aught but a vision of light.

The next place where they made any stay was at Tremezzo on Lake Como. Here thick woods grew up to the back windows of their villa, which was on the border of the lake. A terrace built over the water contained easy chairs and was screened by thick and delicate vines whose tassels hung and swayed from the trellises above. Hawks wheeled lazily over the water, and from the opposite shore rose mountains tier on tier, the highest patched with snow. The moon rose behind these hills that night, making a scene of soft splendor; yet these ungrateful Americans talked low of Venice, and when some strolling singers stopped under the trees and sang "O Carmela," the moon grew dim to Edwina. However, thanks to Mr. Remick, "O Carmela" was her own now. She felt conscious that these tears were not all for Venice, and disciplined herself by immediately beginning to talk.

"If I want to weep over 'Carmela' when I get home, won't it be a nice antidote to think of the Remicks! Are you glad they 're not with us here, little Eunice?"

Miss Pritchard sighed contentedly. "I 'm never less alone than when alone with you, Ned."

"That 's what the French call '*solitude à deux*,'" remarked Edwina.

"I just call it nice. It 's less trouble."

"Oh yes, it 's nice," agreed the girl, swallowing a sigh which threatened to grow into something more. She had tried that *solitude à deux* as yet but twice: two minutes in St. Cecilia's tomb and three minutes in the Colosseum; yet those minutes stood up like mountain peaks in the panorama of her short life. Dangerous thoughts! She hurried on.

"I wonder if the Remicks have reached England, and if Miss Remick has her own tea again?

What a time she had at Capri after her tea gave out! How funny she was at the table anyway. She was always saying that the mutton tasted *sheepy;* and then the peas! Do you remember how she always hoped they were fresh? 'It's so disappointing to find them bottled, is n't it?'"

Miss Pritchard laughed at Edwina's imitation of the husky voice.

Eunice had her fill of flowers, vines, and trees now in the Italian June. The wistaria and rose vines, the oleander-trees, as well as the magnolia and laurel, kept her busy examining and marveling. Then she and Edwina took walks beside the lake under ancient plane-trees whose boughs roofed the road, and looked at the picturesque villas. These princely homes were set on the hillside. Their terraces, groves, fountains, and festooned garlands of roses resembled the engravings of the Celestial City in Miss Pritchard's old copy of "Pilgrim's Progress."

After a week of this *dolce far niente*, the travelers sailed on to Lugano. Daylight lasted now until after nine o'clock, and they dined in their hotel garden near a giant pine-tree whose trunk measured twenty-one feet in circumference. Its symmetry and height were so perfect, tapering from a grand width to a point, that Miss Pritchard could scarcely eat. The hotel was built into the lake's edge, and it reminded Edwina of Venice to be able to lean from her window and look down into the water. It was clear as glass, and large fish swam directly below. Planets rose behind the hills and sent quivering lights across the lake, and the girl forgot to go to bed.

Eunice, being less romantically inclined, would have been glad to sleep, but her room had the discomfort so general in foreign lands of a door communicating with the neighboring one. The latter was occupied by a couple of portly women whom Eunice had noticed at dinner. She had been many times astonished during her wanderings by the naïveté, if not selfishness, of talkative couples in these rooms with a tell-tale door; and as she lay to-night wearily and unwillingly listening to the preferences of these Boston ladies regarding their underwear, the only thing that cheered her was the reflection that their auditor might as easily have been a man as her little sleepy self.

Eunice and Edwina made the enchanting trip up lakes Lugano and Maggiore to Isola Bella and Stresa, then back to Lugano, whence they started for Munich. This day on which they took a reluctant leave of Italy was a memorable one to Miss Pritchard in its natural beauty. The drive up to the station amid long hedges of honeysuckle and magnolia-trees in full bloom strained her loyalty, in the first place, to her native land. Then came the wonderful ride through the pass of St. Gothard, sometimes up among the snow mountains, sometimes amid the luxuriant foliage of June that made the foam of the measureless waterfalls and dashing torrents dazzlingly white in contrast. Anything so grand Eunice had never seen, and once having been for minutes reduced to speechlessness by the transporting panorama, she leaned solemnly toward Edwina and declared: —

"I am having to say patriotic hymns!"

They alighted at Zurich for a day, then went on to Munich, where their letters awaited them. There was one for Miss Pritchard from Howard Champion. She read it when they had returned to their hotel, while Edwina sat by burning with impatience, her eyes unseeingly scanning a letter from Mr. Glenn.

At last Eunice gave an exclamation. "I do think it's the queerest thing for such a great, strong fellow as Mr. Champion to think so much about the weather! This is one hymn of praise about it, just as the last was all complaints. I should have expected him to be a little less put to it for subjects to write about. He's been to Oberammergau too."

"What does he say?"

"He enjoyed it wonderfully. I'll let you read it in a minute. He says he is glad you engaged our accommodations so long ago, for the rush is enormous. Here it is," passing Edwina the letter.

The girl bowed her head over the sheet so that its shining waves were presented at Miss Pritchard, who, however, had opened the second letter, which bore an Italian stamp and was from their new correspondent. He had sent them several communications, to which they had responded. Edwina dwelt as long as she dared on Champion's strong handwriting, but looked up when Eunice after a while remarked that they had another letter from "The Beauty."

"It is to us both again," she said. "I 'll read it; and here is a pressed pansy he has enclosed."

Dears my, — I am so glad to received your kind letter, which you said that have not got my letter. Very displeased; because I don't remember so many things as I did before. I have written in those letter that we have had one of our brother lost in the Transval dead. Perhaps I told you when you were in Capri I had a brother in the Transval; of course can you think how painful about my mother the affliction that she had, also my sisters and brothers. There are six weeks go that he is dead, and my mother she is still in lamentation (tears) always with her son and forever she cry; she has been indisposed for her son she saise always. I did n't seen him from two years and he is dead.

Dears mine, so displeased at home, am sorry to give you sad news, but the God he desire so, we must be glad is indeed.

Well, Miss Wilder, I wish you well and also the kind Mrs. Eunice, all in good health, and I hope you don't forget to remember always about Luigi, and I pray you also, dear Wilder, so much indeed to send me your fotograph, yours and Mrs. Pritchard, because I like so much to have them in my house. I will hope that you don't used displeased about my demand because with those kodak you get mine and can you see Luigi near you, but I cannot see you. Of course, please, Miss Wilder, sent them to me.

Dear Miss Edwina, how should be happy to see your sweet fingers when you plai the piano with all the Italian songs. The best melody it is the piano what I like, spacialy when a lady she sing. I did n't know that when you were in Capri that you know about the piano; well, I hope that come again in Capri and I will see your light fingers when they plai, and I will also sing "*O sole mio*," and "*Maria Mari*."

I am very glad to received your nice letter from Lago di Como. I was afraid you is n't wrote me; but you said you went in Venice and with moonlight you went out; so disappointed to be not there with a gondola all gathered, so sorry not be with you every places.

Did you have taken any bath in Italy in Capri, the water is so splendid, so warm clear very beautiful, but not many people are here, so few. I wanted go some away, and I went to Sorrento with a Germany family, they were so kind with me I told them if they won't take out me in Germany and they said we could not, so of course I have thought to remain in Capri another year and after, I go away if I don't found anything; but if you write me for always I will let you know all. Dear Signorina, let me know in wich country you will remain before you go to America.

My mother she thank you so much for your remembrance to her and she send you both the double compliment and thanks. Your kindness is so nice. She enjoy your desirous letter.

You are at Lago di Como ; there I would like be, but is n't possible for me. How I shall be happy if I did to meet you between the street as long as you walk, but could n't be so.

I write you long letter but I should be never tired when I am in writting to you because I do it with all my affection. I wish you happiness with joy and mirth. Excuse me if my position it is so poor I could n't do the duty as you merit, but I send you a simple flower with smelling from Capri which you will accept with heart ; and please read this letter both, with our hat off.

With kindly reguards,

Your dear

S. Luigi

Excuse my confidence that I ask your fotograph. Addio.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PASSION PLAY

Edwina had a bright thought concerning Oberammergau. It was to precede the crowd which would arrive on the regular train from Munich, by spending the night in some village close by the Mecca of so many pilgrims, and thus be able to arrive quietly and early in the morning at Oberammergau. A search of her map revealed a place called Murnau, whose description sounded like what they were seeking; so on the afternoon of the twenty-second of June, in a beating rain-storm, they drove to the station in Munich and took their train. When at seven o'clock they arrived at their destination the rain had ceased, and they seemed to have reached Arcadia. The little lake called the Staffen See smiled in the recovered sunlight, and the thick woods glistened as they dried their tears.

"Where 's the village? Where 's anybody? Where 's anything?" asked Edwina laughing.

A rosy-cheeked little boy advanced to them, and said something in German. The girl shook her head, but helplessly yielded her belongings. He slung the dress-suit case across his back, took a bag in each hand, and started into a path that led downhill through the still forest.

"Nobody lives here but fairies apparently," said Edwina. "It 's my impression he is a gnome and we 're going underground."

The path was so narrow they were obliged to walk single file, and its steep windings were so sudden that the little lad looked back from time to time to see if they were following; and he went so nimbly that the crazy-quilt of labels on Edwina's dress-suit case glimmering among the fir-trees was their only beacon. Occasionally they met a man with a feather in his alpine hat who said "*Guten abend*" as he strode by. Brooks gurgled beside them, and after fifteen minutes' walk the woods grew thinner, and a lovely streaked sky shone down on the Staffen See and the little hotel that nestled among huge trees on its shore.

"Did you ever see such a fascinating, lonely place!" ejaculated Edwina. "Cousin Eunice, I shall never get you away from here. It is as still as a picture."

They had the Kurhaus to themselves, as the season had scarcely opened. The kindly French landlord treated them with the utmost courtesy. It was strange to have their choice of rooms, to stroll through empty corridors where were cards upon which Eunice gazed with worshiping eyes, for they politely begged guests to close the doors quietly.

"You can make the rest of the trip alone, Ned," she said. "I 'll meet you at Hamburg."

In the late twilight they looked out of their windows upon more forest paths that led uphill among the fir-trees, and with pangs to think they could not linger for days and explore them, they lay down to sleep in the cool balsamic silence.

Next morning early, although the host had assured them that their bags would go with them to the station "by favor of the little one," it was a man who escorted them through the hushed greenwood. It would have been a hard climb for the rosy-cheeked laddie so laden, and they were glad of the change. The porter, although they told him they could not speak German, occasionally made some friendly remark, and once he turned to Edwina with a beaming countenance and said: "*Oberammergau?*" then pointing to the clear sky: "*Zu Christus*?" The girl replied in the affirmative, and he went on with reverent manner to state that he had seen the play.

When they reached a cleared spot, the man stood still where lake and mountains formed a picture. "*Es ist schön — Deutschland?*" he said.

It was *schön* all the way that morning as their train crept slowly up through banks and beds of unrivaled wild flowers, and through the German forests where every tree seems tended like a plant. It was exciting to Edwina that they were really nearing that little village in the Bavarian Alps which has involuntarily grown world-famous.

"Do you know how the Passion Play came to be given in the first place, cousin Eunice?" she asked, after a long silence occupied in gazing from the car windows.

"Something about a plague, was n't it?"

"Yes. In 1634 the plague raged here, and the despairing peasants prayed to God, promising that if He would arrest it they would in gratitude present the Passion Play every ten years. The plague ceased, the peasants kept their promise; so naturally after these centuries it is the ambition of every child born in that village to be worthy sometime to take part in the play. The fact of its being given so seldom prevents a mercenary feeling from creeping in, no doubt. Then until this year there has been no railroad to the village, and that has kept the people so remote and simple. This is the first season this train has run."

"It goes as if it was n't used to it," remarked Miss Pritchard. "I 've never said a word of my feelings about this thing, Ned; but from the first it 's been against my better judgment to go to see people try to act out the Gospel story. It still makes me wince to think of it; but I saw how it was: it happened that we were over here in the right year for it, and I saw how set you were on going, so I said to myself that I would n't stand in the way, because if I find it is irreverent or distasteful, I can leave the place and wait for you. Perhaps you won't like it either."

"But remember how Mr. Champion felt about it." These surroundings had double interest for Edwina, inasmuch as her lover had so recently been over the same ground.

"Yes, but we don't know his standards about a thing like this. What would shock us might not shock him."

When the train finally crept into Oberammergau and stopped, the eyes of our travelers were first attracted by the flowing locks of the men and boys, many of them in the Tyrolean costume. The station was already a busy place, and events proved that the catching of the early train had been of great advantage. They repaired at once to the Wohnungsbureau. While still in Cannes they had engaged their seats for the play on June twenty-fourth, in the hope that by so doing they would get the sort of room so necessary to Miss Pritchard's comfort. The officials had indeed reserved for them two of their choicest rooms; and the handsome and amiable young man who speaks English informed them with much satisfaction that apartments had been assigned to them in the house of the parish priest.

Here was an honor indeed, but the information brought apprehension to Eunice's soul, which was verified when they reached the pleasant and airy domicile; for it was indeed as close to the church as the churchyard would permit, and the resonant bell that pealed its clear note from end to end of the village was directly overhead. Edwina knew what this meant to her cousin. She found the priest himself, discovered that he talked French, and asked him if the large bell rang all night. He bent his benevolent head and looked at her pleasantly through his spectacles. "No indeed, Mademoiselle. All night! What an amusing idea!" and he threw back his head and laughed.

Much relieved, Edwina returned to the pleasant, scrupulously clean rooms and told her cousin that the bell was probably used only to announce services. At that moment it rang three-quarters past the hour with a full tone which seemed to be in the room with them. The two looked at each other. Edwina ran downstairs and knocked once again at the priest's door. He came forth smiling at his amusing young guest.

"The bell rings every quarter and the hour, all night, does n't it?" she asked.

"Naturally, Mademoiselle," returned the priest, smiling leniently. "That is so everywhere."

"Yes, I know it is; but my friend cannot sleep near a bell. We shall have to change our rooms. Would you have the kindness to suggest another house?"

The priest's smile went out, and his spectacles changed expression. "I don't know of any," he replied briefly, and turned on his heel.

Edwina was desperate. She knew that the present arrangement would mean two entirely sleepless nights to her cousin, so although Eunice was mortified to cause so much trouble, the two set forth at once for the Wohnungsbureau.

"Of course, we did n't know any especial house to ask for," said Edwina comfortingly, "and who could have dreamed that with four thousand people to provide rooms for, we should have been put up against that only bell in the village?"

"We applied so early, they gave us the very best," said Eunice dismally. "No doubt the priest is disgusted."

"He is. I suppose he is not used to having his fine rooms scorned; and of course he never notices the bell."

"I should think he might understand. Some people would rather sleep on a heap of straw than be kept awake all night like a person under Chinese torture."

They blessed all the fates that there was still an hour before the multitude from Munich would storm the town, and again they entered the Wohnungsbureau and threw themselves on the mercy of the young man who spoke English. He kindly looked over the books to see what might be effected, and at last advised them to go to the house of the man who was to take the part of Samuel. They did so and found the host to be a wood-carver of gentle and noble countenance. He had the rooms they wanted, but hesitated; and on consultation with his plump and rosy wife said he did not dare give them to these ladies on account of other parties who would come to claim them.

Edwina had very few German words at her command, but she used these zealously and eked out her remarks by pantomime. At last the wood-carver took his feathered hat from its nail, put it on his flowing curls, and beckoned to Edwina.

She accompanied him to the Wohnungsbureau eagerly. That amiable young man would smooth her path and they could begin to be happy. But when she entered, great was her disappointment to discover that the Englishman had left the premises; and worst of all, in his place stood the parish priest buried in a ledger, and as soon as he recognized Edwina, blind and deaf. The girl spoke to him timidly. Was this the same face that had beamed so blandly through his spectacles when the priest first welcomed them beneath his roof? He had forgotten his French. Not a word would he say, though he looked up at her once stonily. When Samuel spoke to him he replied briefly in German. The man explained the situation and Edwina listened uncomprehending, her heart in her mouth lest the offended official should forbid the new arrangement. He did not, and for this negative kindness she blessed him mentally, though wondering and regretful to find so much benevolence of manner to be only skin deep.

Silently she returned to the house beside her host in his green Tyrolean costume, feeling acutely the misfortune of having no means of communicating with him. However, he made her understand that they might remain; and Miss Pritchard's gratitude to her child can only be understood by those to whom the daytime never repays five minutes of sleep that is chased away by night. The unwound watch, the untuned harp-strings, all things nerveless and discordant are symbolized in the sufferings of the sleepless. Even the parish priest's tolerance would have borne the strain had he understood.

Once, some months after Eunice and Edwina's return to America, they were talking with a lady who had seen the Passion Play this summer.

"Where did you have your room?" asked Miss Pritchard.

"In the house of the parish priest," responded her friend.

"But the bell!" ejaculated Miss Pritchard.

"I love bells," said the lady placidly.

Eunice gazed at her in amazed fascination. "You are wasted in America, then," she said at last. "You ought to go right back to Europe and stay there!"

Our travelers began at once to roam about the clean village with its quiet river, and houses decorated outside with paintings of Bible scenes. The mountains round about, and especially the majestic Kofel, with its slender cross touching the blue of the sky, appeared like guardians of its purity. The broad-shouldered, flat-backed physique of the men — a round-shouldered or fat citizen seeming a phenomenon — and their friendly, clear, straight-forward gaze, was very attractive. Every one greeted every one else. It seemed to Eunice and Edwina as if they could see in countless ways in this village the effect of an all-pervading, uplifting thought held for centuries. Babies who could barely toddle came to them holding out their little palms — not for pfennige, but to shake hands. Many of the men wore the Tyrolean dress: hats with curling feather in the middle of the back, coat and knee-breeches embroidered in green, with deer or some hunting device, bare knees, heavy gray and green hose reaching to the ankles only, and shoes.

At evening Eunice and Edwina watched the cows come tinkling home in long procession, and when night had fallen, the village band played through the streets full glad strains which told that on the morrow the sacred play would be given. Edwina had in mind to attend the early church service next morning, when the players would be consecrated for the parts they were about to assume; but the falling rain dampened her ardor. The play was to commence at eight o'clock, and the rain continued until the crowds had reached the theatre. The village streets presented a remarkable sight.

At ordinary times people find it a little difficult to get to church promptly by half past ten; and a sermon of half an hour is quite long enough. This Sunday morning it appeared to be no trouble at all for four thousand persons to pick their way through rain and mud, and be quietly in their places at eight o'clock. There they sat with one intermission for lunch, until half past five, and no one fidgeted, or yawned, or appeared fatigued. Could any other story have held them?

The audience was seated beneath a roof, but the stage, two hundred feet in breadth, was open to the sky. A green hill rose behind it with groves of trees. The streets of Jerusalem wound between the houses of priests and rulers. The breeze lifted the flowing hair of the actors as they came and went, and such was the care with which they had been selected for their parts, and the truthfulness of their costuming, that to our travelers, fresh from the world's great pictures, it seemed as if the conceptions of Raphael, da Vinci, and del Sarto had come down from the walls and were walking about.

It took Eunice a short time to discover that she need not have winced. Every feeling of reverence that one can bring to the Passion Play will only be enhanced by seeing it. It is a marvelous thing that such a performance can be given in detail without one jarring note, one overdone scene, or one deflection from good taste.

Josef Mayr, after having been for thirty years prominent in the eyes of the people as the *Christus*, has trained Anton Lang, his successor, and himself lends the unapproached majesty of his presence to the prologue which precedes each act; and this self-forgetful spirit is typical of the impersonality of the work of these many hundreds of actors. Their play is to them a sacred rite, and no one conveys the impression of desiring to be observed. All work together, earnestly and sincerely, toward the attainment of a general perfection.

The rain ceased this morning at the opening of the story; and near its beginning, just as Mary

Magdalen threw herself at the feet of the Master, the sun came out and glorified his beautiful head. There were many striking coincidences of sun effects all through the day, and no more rain.

When Mary pleaded with her son not to leave her and go where danger awaited him, the pathos of the scene was memorable. He reminded her of their duty, and his final calm "*Liebe Mutter!*" and her thrilling, quiet "*Jesus, mein Sohn!*" stirred the heart of every listener.

The scene in Gethsemane was touching beyond words to express, and more moving still the moment when John brought Mary to Jerusalem to search for her son. While they were wandering they heard the cruel cries of the crowd, and Jesus appeared, nearly crushed beneath the heavy cross. The pitiful, broken cry of the mother, "*Mein Sohn! mein Kind!*" was never to be forgotten.

Yet all would perhaps agree that the Passion Play was not a painful experience. The beauty and strength of the *Christus*, his shining head gleaming in the sunlight as he moved among the adoring or hating people, made the impression which prevailed. The ceremony of the Last Supper was a scene for which to be lastingly grateful. During the washing of the disciples' feet and the giving of the bread and wine, an invisible angel chorus sang softly from time to time. Every movement was so graceful, so dignified and deliberate, so adequate, as to be indescribable.

Peter's wretchedness at having denied his master, Judas's craft and subsequent despair, were given with a naturalness beyond mere acting. Herod and Pilate in the rich vestments of the Cæsars endeavored not to convict Jesus, and Barabbas was shown in all repulsive contrast to the bound Nazarene; but the shouting, ferocious crowd demanded the crucifixion.

It is not told how the *Christus* is affixed to the cross, but the illusion was perfect, and the long scene marvelously given. The deposition from the cross was tenderly and reverently accomplished, and then the entombment.

In the next scene the stone fell with a crash from the sepulchre and Christ appeared in shining robes, while the soldiers were prostrated. The ascension was made impressive, and left one marveling and questioning how these peasants, without the aid of make-up or artificial lights, in the open air of day under the free sky, had so portrayed the strongest story of all time with its holy passion and miracle that the hushed audience, unconscious of the passing hours, looked and listened spellbound, and at last went on their ways, still in the spirit of worship.

Out in the street Miss Pritchard saw one lady meet a friend and heard her ask: "Have you enjoyed the day?"

The man replied: "If you will allow me to correct your expression, I appreciated the day. It seems not right — like sacrilege — to say I enjoyed it."

A little further along Eunice and Edwina met a young American who was also staying in the house of Samuel, and with whom they had talked the night before. He was alone, and seemed pleased now to have encountered them. "May I go to supper with you?" he asked eagerly.

"Certainly," replied Eunice. "Where had we better go?"

"Anton Lang's father has an inn," replied the young man, whose name was Norton. "Let us go there. We might see Lang."

"I believe he never appears on the day of the play," said Edwina, "and that certainly shows good taste; but let us go."

When they were seated in the low-ceiled dining-room of the Lang homestead, and Mr. Norton, who spoke German, had ordered their supper, Eunice regarded him kindly. She could see that he was feeling strongly.

"We have had a wonderful day," she said.

The young fellow nodded. "I 've been trying to think how I could write home to my people about it; but there is nothing to do but to tell them it is the most divine thing in performance and effect that I ever experienced." His eyes filled as he spoke.

As they began their supper, a number of broad-shouldered wavy-haired men dropped in one by one, all with the lovely expression in their faces, and gathered at a neighboring table. Mr. Norton asked their blonde Mädchen if the man in the corner had not taken the part of Peter. She glanced around the well-filled board as she nodded, and said naïvely: "It is nothing but apostles." All were there except John; and our party glanced often at the quiet, cheerful group conversing in low tones as they ate. When the Americans rose, the other company gave them a friendly look, and Mr. Norton bowed and said: "*Besten Gruss den Herr'n Aposteln*," and the men rose, and courteously smiled and bowed a farewell.

The next morning their new friend accompanied Eunice and Edwina to the shops of those actors who had taken the principal parts in yesterday's play. They found them besieged by people who, like themselves, wished for a closer view of these celebrities, and to procure specimens of their handiwork. The dignity, simplicity, unconsciousness, and ease of these peasants confronted by the eager eyes and tongues of their admirers formed a striking lesson in good manners.

Our travelers first visited Peter Rendl, the wood-carver, who had impersonated John. His spiritual face, framed in long, dark hair, was more attractive and beautiful the nearer one approached him, and looked as if he had borne the image of the beloved disciple in his heart during the ten years since he had last taken the part. Edwina asked him for a photograph of John in a certain size, and the manner of his reply that he had not the *Johannes* in that size made it evident that in his mind the *Johannes* was quite separate from Peter Rendl. They brought pieces of his carving upon which he wrote his name, and then took their way to the shop of Anton Lang, the potter, who, as the *Christus*, was this summer one of the most famous men in Europe. Busts and photographs of him, from life size down to the miniature, appeared in thousands of windows in all the large cities; yet he was the most unconscious person in his crowded shop this morning. Goodness and modest courtesy shone in his face as he endeavored to satisfy the demands upon him; and his patience was unfailing, even with impertinent and vulgar questions which certain curious ones managed to have interpreted to him. Eunice and Edwina's young escort, still glowing with the holy fire of yesterday, waited only to hear one woman demand of Lang if it did n't tire him to hang so long on the cross, and then he excused himself to his friends and said he would wait outside.

Left without his knowledge of German, Edwina in her turn approached Lang and asked him to write his name on some pieces of pottery. He had been signing numbers of his photographs for his admirers, and she made him understand that she had his picture, but that to her that was the *Christus;* she should prefer to have his name on his work. He acquiesced with sweet comprehension of the idea, and complied. Edwina told him that the vases were to go to America. He expressed interest that the ladies had come so far, and asked them if they liked the play, and poor Edwina stammered among her adjectives to see if haply she might find one which would be fit to apply here. The young man caught her spirit at least, and his voice and smile were very lovely as he hoped to see them again in ten years, — *vielleicht früher*, and took their hands at parting.

Finding Mr. Norton waiting patiently without, they urged him to go in once more. After some hesitation he obeyed, and finally rejoined them, a satisfied light in his eyes.

The three took the train together for Munich. A boy of twelve with golden curls hanging on his shoulders had helped them with their bags. Mr. Norton said to him in parting that perhaps ten years hence he might be taking part in the Passion Play. The boy looked straight before him. "One cannot tell," he said. "One must live up to it."

That is the spirit that pervades the children of Oberammergau. They have one ruling thought, one zealous ambition, and the cross on the Kofel is its symbol.

CHAPTER XIX

SWITZERLAND

Eunice and Edwina were as content in Munich as tourists can be in Germany who are not conversant with its language. The opera, the pictures, driving in the English garden, strolling in the Hofgarten, listening to the band in the Feldherrn halle, were pleasures within their comprehension; but Edwina found many Germans to be like her voluble chambermaid, who insisted on conversing glibly in spite of the Americans' monosyllables.

Edwina's self-defensive and plaintive, "*Aber ich verstehe nicht Josefina!*" had only the effect to make the pretty girl come a step nearer, speak much louder, and gesture more wildly. Our Americans felt sympathy for a countrywoman whom they encountered, and who told a vivacious tale of her recent embarrassments in traveling in this strange land.

Once as she and a friend had been riding on the railway, the train began to slacken. The guard came in and said, "*Umsteigen!*"[1] The lady looked up pleasantly and nodded. His brow grew dark and he repeated loudly, "*Umsteigen!*"

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[1] Change cars.

"M'h'm," smiled the lady placidly. "UMSTEIGEN!" roared the guard, shaking his fist in her naïve, bewildered face. Then he went out, and the last thing she heard before he slammed the door was "*Umsteigen!*"

She turned to her friend: "Well, what's the matter with *him*, I should like to know? You sit at that window and I'll sit at this, and we'll watch for Umsteigen, and when we get there we'll see what it's like."

"I've just made up my mind," added the lady as her listeners laughed, "that I'll never travel in Germany again until I've learned to *umsteigen* and *einsteigen* and *aufsteigen* with any of them."

It was in Berlin that Edwina found her greatest difficulty in shopping, as up to that time she had found French spoken everywhere. For a while she was misled by the *ignis fatuus* of clerks who were brought forward as speaking English, and who directed them on wild goose chases, through all sorts of misunderstandings. After being sent far up Unter den Linden for certain silver hatpins, only to find themselves confronted with a wigmaker who was prepared to sell them hairpins, they tried to shop by pantomime if necessary rather than believe what they were told. Once pantomime failed them. Edwina wished to buy one of the little rubber pigs which blow up into shape and collapse with one expiring moan. They entered a shop where they knew they were kept; but not seeing any, they asked their regular question: "Do you speak English?"

This always elicited one of two replies. One was: "Leedle;" the other, a shake of the head. This time the man shook his head.

Edwina said: "*Haben Sie kleine*"—then turning desperately to her cousin: "Oh dear, what *is* pig?"

Miss Pritchard felt like saying with the young man at Naples: "You can search *me!*"

Edwina turned back to the man. "*Haben Sie* —Oh, you must know!—*haben Sie—ein kleine —Schinken?*"[1]

The shopkeeper gave one stare, and then rose brilliantly to the emergency: "*Ach, ja! Schweinchen—Schweinchen! Wie viel Schweinchen, Fräulein?*"

But before Berlin came the visit to Switzerland.

On the Fourth of July Eunice and Edwina were in Lucerne, where they stayed for a week doing homage to the Rigi, and Pilatus, and cruising amid the wonderful lake scenery in the intervals of cold rains. Next came Interlaken; but they seemed to feel nearer to the Jungfrau at the neighboring village of Wilderswyl, so they took up their abode in a little hotel standing in a green field with apple and cherry trees and a rushing river as the most exciting neighbors: a spot after Eunice's own heart. There was nothing between her windows and the regal Jungfrau except the swelling velvet hills, tree-laden, which framed its dazzling whiteness.

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[1] Ham.

Their good fortune in weather returned in force; and as rains are so frequent in the mountains, this cloudless season drove tourists from one excursion to another. Eunice and Edwina, the morning after their arrival, took the little mountain train for the Schynige Platte, six thousand feet above. Behind the open car was an odd little engine that seemed to get its head down and push the car up the mountain steep, by clutching each foot of the way with its iron hands and feet. The motion was wonderfully smooth, and the excursion excitingly beautiful. The road wound in such a way that the scene constantly changed. They passed amid banks of wild flowers, past steep cascades, through leafy forests and verdant fields, and gradually dominated the deep valleys and lakes, feeling conscious of that overwhelming sense of inadequacy which oppresses sensitive natures at the first comprehensive view of grand mountain scenery.

When the Platte was reached Eunice and Edwina stood on the terrace commanding the snow range whose dazzling fields seemed but a stone's toss away. Then they took the twenty minutes' climb to the horn called the Daube and looked down. The lakes of Brienz and Thun, connected by the fine winding ribbon of the canal, looked like small patches of pale green ice. On the way back to the Platte hotel, Eunice sat down amid acres of forget-me-nots, violets, and buttercups, and feasted her eyes on their simpler beauties.

The little chalets on the mountain sides looked like bird houses, and the near views of them which Eunice and Edwina obtained walking after tea about Wilderswyl, made them wonder why such simple, picturesque houses were not imitated in villages at home. Often a pious legend was carved in wood across the façade, often their balconies were red and white with overhanging geraniums, but always they were attractive, and the courtesy of the village people recalled Oberammergau. No matter how rough in appearance the man, woman, or child they passed in the quiet lanes, a *Gruss* was sure to be said, often rebuking their own American lack of courtesy.

One day they spent on Lake Thun, viewing Oberhofen and its other attractions, and another they took the mountain car to Lauterbrunnen, in the midst of its waterfalls. Then skyward over the Wengern Alp straight into the snow mountains toward the Eiger-gletsch. The white satin sides and peaks of the Schneehorn and the Silberhorn gleamed against the blue of heaven with awe-inspiring purity; and when, after the wondrous ascent with its nearer and changing views of the famous range, the pilgrims left their little car, they found themselves close to the great trio, the Jungfrau, the Mönch, and the Eiger. Across a descending snow-field lay the glacier toward which many of the tourists set out.

"Come, cousin Eunice," said Edwina in a matter-of-course tone, although she knew that next to night-noises in Miss Pritchard's list of aversions came slippery walking.

"No, you go on. I 'll sit right here in the sunshine and wait for you," returned her cousin, after one glance over the snowy billows.

"Are n't you afraid a German tourist will come and talk to you?" Edwina smiled as she suggested the counter-irritant. Miss Pritchard had already freed her mind concerning the enormous men with feathered hats and seal rings on their forefingers who take up two places in the car, knock your purse from your hand, and then exhort you to behold the *wunderschöne blick!* All her doubts of the male sex came to an emphatic certainty when the foreign masculine tourist was in question.

"You know you 'll be sorry if you miss it," added Edwina.

Miss Pritchard wavered. She took a measuring glance. "It does n't look very far, does it?" she remarked.

"No, it 's nothing. Let us start."

Eunice's spirit of enterprise conquered until she had taken a few steps down the icy path. "No, no, Ned. This is against my better judgment. Let me stay. If anybody speaks to me, I 'll just say 'Nein.'"

"Oh, nonsense, little Eunice. I could hold up two of you."

For a time all did go well, but at last the path narrowed and grew steeper. Moreover, the further they went, the more the glacier retreated.

"When shall I learn to trust my intuitions?" gasped Miss Pritchard, scant of breath. Her stern, martyred countenance endangered Edwina's self-control during all the ups and downs of the transit; but at last they drew near the mass of green ice.

"We 're there — see!" said Edwina, pointing to the artificial opening which had been made in the clear ice revealing a frozen corridor.

"Are you going in there?" desperately.

"I don't care about it. We see the formation."

"I should think so!" returned Miss Pritchard, giving excited vent to her feelings. "It 's a sinful waste of the middle of July to skate and slip and freeze around a mountain like this! The Creator meant such places to be inaccessible to man, — of course He did; but nothing would do but we must leave the flowers and birds and manage to get here somehow, just like Bluebeard's wife going into the forbidden closet; and you know I 'll never get up that hill in this world, Edwina Wilder. When I tell you distinctly that a thing is against my better judgment I should think" —

But Edwina, struggling with her risibles and knowing that she would require all her breath for the return trip, seized Eunice's hand comfortingly and patted it as it lay in her arm. "Now we 're going to take our time and enjoy it," she said, drawing her timorous cousin along.

"Enjoy it! I shall say hymns. I did all the way down."

"Patriotic hymns?"

"No. I did n't need to. America is good

enough for anybody. Real hymns: 'My days are gliding swiftly by,' and 'In the hour of trial,' and" —

"O cousin Eunice, don't!" implored Edwina, her throat convulsing, for Miss Pritchard's unsteady little feet were slipping about and jerking the words out of her.

Men with sledges accosted them, inviting them to coast. Inarticulate contempt from Eunice greeted the suggestion. Edwina expected every minute to hear her invoke Howard Champion; but apparently the present difficulty precluded comforting thoughts, and they plodded on in silence.

"I have n't even got on my right glasses!" said Eunice after an unexpected step when Edwina just saved her from a downfall.

"You 're doing beautifully, dear. Now, this is the last steep place."

"Oh — the last!" scornfully.

"Yes, the rest is more level and soft."

They pushed on, Miss Pritchard with one eye shut the better to see, and an expression as of a martyr on her way to the stake. Suddenly there came a treacherous hollow, Eunice's foot slipped, and she fell into a drift. "*There I go!*" she announced in a tone which put the climax upon all which had preceded. Edwina gave up and laughed immoderately, even while she was helping her cousin to rise. A massive German woman was just starting doubtfully and slowly down the path. She saw Miss Pritchard fall, and paused to view the scene with a serious countenance. Edwina's irrepressible hilarity caused her at first to wonder, then to relax into a faint smile; but evidently the circumstance decided her as to the vanity of glaciers, for she ponderously and slowly wheeled about and retraced her steps.

"Look, what a mercy it was that you went down!" gurgled Edwina, whisking the snow from her cousin's side. "If that woman had gone on and fallen, the eternal glacier would have cracked from stem to stern."

Eunice, in the nearness of the station platform, was able to laugh too. "Our feet are just soaking, Ned Wilder."

"I know it, you poor little dear. I 'm awfully penitent for making you go; but we shall be dry in five minutes in that tremendous sunshine."

This proved a true prophecy, and they took the next car down to lovely Grindelwald.

Those mornings and evenings on their balcony at Wilderswyl, with the Jungfrau before them in her varying moods, and no sound more disturbing that the river rushing beneath the foothills, were a certain good which Miss Pritchard was loath to leave. She had learned, however, to put great trust in Edwina's planning, so was able to be cheerful one morning when they again took the steamer on the lake and rode past the romantic Giessbach Fall, back to Brienz. Going by train from that point to Meiringen, they engaged the coupé seats in the diligence for the Grimsel Pass and then went to a hotel to dinner. The noonday heat was oppressive as it beat upon the roof of the cushioned coupé when they were ready to start.

"Ned, dear, I suppose you did the best you could. Those outside seats do look so comfortable."

"And cost less," returned Edwina. "Is n't it too bad; but there was only one to be had, and I did n't think you 'd like us to be separated so many hours."

"Are we going to sit in this thing for hours?"

"Not at this temperature, I hope. Don't these golf capes and furs look ridiculous! Let 's put them under our feet." The girl then proceeded to let down the four windows of their padded hot-box, and in a few minutes the five restless horses started, and new combinations of Switzerland's beauty began to be displayed.

For seven hours they mounted. They passed herds of cows and goats with their clinking bells grazing high on the Alps, then wound above them, up, up, till they looked like black and white beans rolling about below. Water fell from impressive heights. Once two boiling cataracts collided as they fell with terrific force, making ceaseless and deafening turmoil. Fields of Alpine roses spread patches of pink among the green. Mountain streams rushed madly over and around the obstructions in their paths. The temperature soon grew comfortable, then cool, then began to gain a frosty quality which caused the despised wraps to be lifted from the floor of the coupé. After a time, vegetation left behind, the bank beside the diligence showed layers of snow several feet in thickness, and Edwina was obliged to close the coupé windows against the chilling atmosphere of the late afternoon. At last those interminable ascending zigzag roads led out upon a level, and a solitary little mountain lake showed upon the bleak height.

Then followed a novel drive down hill toward the hotel of the Rhone Glacier. "I suppose it is perfectly safe, of course," said Miss Pritchard, as the five horses, having gone at a lively trot down the first section of the zigzag descent, swung around the corner into the next stretch with unabated speed.

"Is n't it fine!" returned Edwina. "It is as good as driving a Roman chariot race, with none of the responsibility."

The driver's seat being above the coupé, nothing obstructed their view of the horses.

"See them do the outer edge as we swing around corners. Are n't they graceful? I feel as if I ought to stand up and let my hair fly back and get hold of the reins."

"It 's a mercy you can't!"

"And there 's the glacier."

"Don't you say 'glacier' to me!"

"You don't object to looking at it, do you? You 'll never have another chance, perhaps, to see six miles of glacier."

"But what are those bright blue patches on it?"

"I can't imagine. You shall climb up in the morning and tell me."

Miss Pritchard would have smiled if the horses had n't been going so fast, but she was keeping one eye on them, and was glad when the diligence finally drew up before the hotel, set in such grand and solitary spaces for the accommodation of pilgrims to the great Rhone Glacier. The passengers, well wrapped, and with noses and ears red with the cold, alighted. How cheery the large open fire looked, glowing in the hotel, how sharp were the appetites for supper, and how Miss Pritchard slept under downy blankets in the coolness and stillness!

Edwina laughed about it in the morning. "It was made to order for you, was n't it, dear! Mountain passes between you and any neighbor is your ideal."

"Yes, I 've about decided to stay here, the world forgetting and by the world forgot."

"Supposing we visit the glacier first," suggested Edwina.

"I guess not!"

"Why, of course you will," said the girl, laughing. "It is nothing like the other. A stroll through this little level valley, that 's all."

And Miss Pritchard, half-incredulous, and ready to turn back at the first suggestion of snow, found this to be true. The two as they walked through the brisk morning air kept their eyes on the dashes of dark vivid blue that patched the glacier so mysteriously. They proved to be jagged holes and fissures in the dull snowy exterior of the mountain, revealing its brilliant ice. At the foot was a splendid natural arch shot with indigo, from which issued a little streamlet, not very clear by reason of its mixture with snow; an unimportant little brook, apparently, yet hurried and impetuous in its movement from the very first, as if it knew what a work it was to perform in the world. Eunice and Edwina viewed it with interest, for underneath this regal arch of solid crystal they were seeing the birth of the Rhone River.

At noon of that day they again took places in the diligence and continued the descent of the mountain. The first vegetation they reached consisted of fir-trees, and all the air turned balsamic; then came a gradual return to the lavish summer flowering of tree and shrub and plant, before they struck into the level road that leads to Brigue. As in Scotland last season, so in Switzerland now, the weather made continual exceptions in favor of these travelers. Through the grand gorges, and by the boiling torrents, to Zermatt they went, and after worshiping at the shrine of the Matterhorn, the Weisshorn, and the Breithorn, came on to Montreux and sailed for hours through the royally blue waters of Lake Leman to Geneva. The Rhone River, after its impetuous and wild youth, plunges through the waters of this lake and emerges to flow on, so strong, broad, clear, and reposeful, that Eunice and Edwina, remembering the weak, ambitious baby they had seen at the glacier, seemed to see the symbolization of a human soul.

One morning early they took the train for St. Gervais, and thence by stage to Chamonix. They thought themselves inured to the beauties of mountain scenery, and the varied views of the snow range as they ascended, though inspiring, were familiar, until they reached the spot where for the first time Mont Blanc lifted "its stupendous mantle of snow" against the fleckless blue of heaven. That was a moment when words failed. The road skirted huge glaciers as they approached Chamonix. It was their plan to remain there only for the day. For hours they walked and sat, always watching the "queen of European mountains," always grateful to the fleecy clouds which as they began to touch the sky here and there never veiled her dazzling beauty, until they were starting to drive back to St. Gervais.

The travelers had been on their way but a short time when turning, they found a bank of gray cloud had formed and fallen, entirely obscuring the lower portion of the mountain. The effect of increased height was startling as the vast, solid, pure snow mound appeared, apparently unsupported, in the very sky; but later came the climax. It was our travelers' good fortune to have all the clouds disappear and the rare, the wonderful Alpenglow cover Mont Blanc. Forty miles away in

Geneva the people were gathering on the Quai to gaze at the flush they could view at that distance, but here the sight was so supernatural in its beauty that Eunice and Edwina always afterward felt as if they must have seen into the other world. The colossal mountain was apparently entirely of glowing, translucent flame.

The exalting thrill of the sight held them spellbound long after they had passed from it; but in a wild and lonely locality another novel circumstance brought them to earth figuratively, and came dangerously near doing so literally. Their stage was one which ran in connection with the last train leaving St. Gervais that night for Geneva. Nine Americans on it had their tickets for the early morning train for Paris. At the top of a hill the brake broke, and the stage chased the horses down the narrow incline, swinging from side to side until most of the passengers on top were pale from the motion as well as from fright.

One woman threw both her arms around Edwina and clung there, despite the fact that the girl had hers clasping Miss Pritchard. As soon as they reached a level the driver got down and mended the brake as well as he could. Starting, it held only for a few rods, and again the stage could only be controlled by holding the horses in at a snail's pace, which would never reach the depot in time for the train. The entire distance to St. Gervais being down hill, the problem became serious. One man's fears overcoming him, he descended and started off to walk. Then came alternations of rushing, swinging, and halting, and a stout man inside put his head out at each stop to inquire in French if they were about to be upset down a precipice.

The poor driver had exhausted his ingenuity, and as they luckily reached an inn, the men about the place joined with him in the effort to repair damages. But twilight was falling, and the nervous passengers began to try to get another conveyance. To their astonishment and chagrin, this was impossible. Vainly they offered high prices to the phlegmatic head of the establishment. The only horses he had were due to take a trip for which such a proceeding would unfit them.

One of the girls began to cry and to announce emphatically that she would not stay there! Nothing should induce her to stay there! This declaration made Edwina smile, even though the time was already growing so short as to make catching the train difficult under the best circumstances.

Just as they were all in despair, another stage came into sight on the road, and going in the right direction. Nobody ever understood how it came to be nearly empty; but so it was, and there began a brisk descent from the broken vehicle. Had the driver of the new one declined to stop, there is no telling what would have occurred; but he did stop, and the eager passengers had mounted in a twinkling and were off. They studied their watches and urged the driver, but he was sulky and would give them no satisfaction. Long before they reached St. Gervais their own stage came recklessly fast in pursuit and the driver called to get his passengers back, in terror, no doubt, of his employers; but the new driver whipped his horses and paid no attention. He had no idea of relinquishing the money he expected to secure from the railroad company.

As they neared St. Gervais they met men anxiously running up the road to search for them. These with gestures urged them on. The train was being held for them. Galloping to the depot, they rushed from the stage across the platform and boarded the train with sighs of relief, notwithstanding their famished condition. Edwina had bought buns and pears for her own and her cousin's supper, and these they cut up and divided with the six Americans who shared their compartment. Otherwise they went empty until midnight, when they reached their pension in Geneva.

It was, of course, nothing new for these two to leave a foreign city with regret; but surely there are not many places with Geneva's summer heat which can boast an utter absence of insects, even of flies, in August. Not only did they never see a mosquito, but although the windows of the pension were constantly open, and uncovered bowls of honey garnished the breakfast table, no fly was ever known to approach their sweetness.

"How do you explain it?" Edwina often asked their little French landlady; and the latter would fling out her hands dramatically; "*Je ne l'explique pas!*"

CHAPTER XX

THE AUSTRIAN HYMN

The next great picture which nature presented to the travelers was found at Neuhausen, where they went to view the Falls of the Rhine. Their room at the Schweizerhof was a proscenium box commanding the famous scene. They looked down on the thickly wooded banks of the curving river, on the gray old castle at the right, and the bridge with its nine arches which spans the emerald water before it rushes into the foam of the broad cataract. A kind favor of fortune provided a full, clear moon to enhance the charm of the picture, and later in the evening artificial lights, both white and colored, illumined the Falls and castle.

The gardens and avenues about the hotel were charming in their floral and leafy display after forty years' assiduous care, and Miss Pritchard reluctantly mounted next morning into the 'bus for Schaffhausen. Scarcely had they left the hotel grounds, however, before a circumstance entirely diverted her thoughts. The strong horses stopped suddenly on a rise of ground, and as Eunice looked inquiringly for the trouble, she gave a tragic exclamation.

"Oh Ned, a great big ox has got right in the way! There's a man pushing it. Oh, I hope they won't hurt the poor thing! He's stopped us right on a hill! What will they do?"

Edwina leaned forward to look, and in half a minute the ox moved on and the horses after it. The girl laughed.

"You don't mean it's drawing us, Ned?"

"It certainly is. The problem is solved."

Schaffhausen being the border line for Germany, there was some delay at the customs, and then our travelers went smoothly on to Nuremberg. To Edwina it was the city of the Meistersingers, and their hotel was so environed with cobblestones, she felt certain that "Walther" must have been obliged to go out into the suburbs to compose the "Prize Song." They stayed several days in this picturesque city, visiting all the famous spots and taking long walks, with pauses on the bridges at sunset.

Eunice's interest in foreign shops had been increasing of late, possibly according to the saying that blessings brighten as they take their flight. One evening, as they were wandering she looked across the street. "I want to go over to that lingery window," she said.

"You're rather ambiguous," said Edwina. "We have such a fixed habit of shop windows, they're all lingery windows to us;" but she saw a *Lingerie* over the way, so they crossed.

Miss Pritchard looked reflectively for a minute at the black and white ribbon that had attracted her attention, and then said she believed she would go in and buy two litres of it.

Leaving Nuremberg, they proceeded to Dresden, where they stayed to see the pictures, and then went on to Berlin. One day while there Edwina turned to Miss Pritchard. "Do you know, cousin Eunice, that two weeks from to-day we sail for home?"

Eunice clasped her hands and sighed dismally. "Dear me!" she cried. "I don't know which way to be homesick!"

And so, feeling that the time was short, they enjoyed sightseeing with quite renewed zest. The cleanliness, beauty, and coolness of Berlin under the azure sky were a surprise to these tourists. The word *palace* had come to rouse every evil instinct of their natures, so bored had they often been by dreary pilgrimages through monotonous, unused rooms, and the one at Charlottenburg seemed to add insult to injury in forcing the visitors to scuff about in those hot felt slippers which one connects with Widow Tibbetts in the tale of Max and Maurice. However, it is darkest just before day, and Potsdam was to come and repay all past wrongs and sufferings by the ideal home at Babelsburg, the romantic charm of Sans Souci, where the waters were springing, as one German had assured them they would be, the Italian beauty of the Orangerie, and the famous shell-room of the Neuespalais; that large submarine grotto composed entirely of shells of every hue and semi-precious stones, interesting aside from itself in being the room where the Emperor and his ideal family hold their Christmas and other festivities. Beside these there were many other joys at Potsdam, to all of which Eunice and Edwina did justice.

It was in Berlin that Miss Pritchard passed out from under her courier's control with regard to shopping. "I've always heard that Germany was the place to buy linen," she replied when Edwina questioned her interest in napery. "You will be out of school, and you will be wanting to entertain, Ned. I want you to do it as prettily as any of the girls." It was the first reference Eunice had made to prospects on the other side of the Atlantic.

"I shall not entertain much. It would be a great bother to you, cousin Eunice, so don't buy such expensive things."

But Eunice loved fine linen, and the shopkeepers tempted her so successfully that Edwina protested more than once as tablecloths, napkins, and centrepieces of satin-like texture, exquisite designs, and delicate embroidery, were one after another accepted.

"Are you forgetting the customs, cousin Eunice?" asked Edwina at last.

"Let me alone, Ned. I'm having a splendid time," was the only response.

They had called the roll of their trunks, some from Paris and some from Cannes, and at last all were packed and ready to start for Hamburg. The few days spent in the latter city were very pleasant. There was such a sense of irresponsibility in having given up all luggage except, such as they could carry in their hands, to the steamship company's care. Now there was nothing to do but kill time in the attractive seaport.

They were to sail on Sunday. Saturday evening after Edwina had retired, she lay awake for a long time, thinking. This was her last night in a foreign land; the last night of the trip which always would be the great event of her life, since it had brought her Champion's love. She thought back to the first day out from New York, when she had noticed him in the dining saloon of the ship. From that her memory deliberately rehearsed the year's events; and while she thought, a chime of bells began to play a hymn. This had not occurred on the previous evenings. Probably it was a Saturday night ceremony; but to Edwina the music was the out-voluntary of her trip. Two parts were carried by the bells in remarkable accord, and the slow, persistent sweetness of the dignified old choral, repeated again and again through the evening stillness, accompanied and added significance to the impressions that surged through her brain.

"Whatever comes, I have had this year," she thought, as disturbing reflections arose. "Whatever comes, I have had this year."

Champion had faithfully abstained from writing her, and she knew what it must have cost him. In his letters to Miss Pritchard he had made no reference to returning to America. Of course, Edwina suspected his intention to return on their ship, and read his failure to mention it as a fear that she might request him not to do so; but her opportunities of communication with him had been so scanty she was not certain but that his professional plans would detain him past their sailing date. If he did not appear on the ship, she had made up her mind to break the truth to Miss Pritchard before they should reach New York Harbor. If he did — how strong and sweet rang out the old choral! — she should see him in three days at farthest. Not a thought could she form beyond this, and she went to sleep with it close, close at her heart.

Miss Pritchard, in a cosy room to which the chimes did not penetrate, was fortunate enough to have no thoughts during the night; but the morning brought many. She was so absorbed while they were riding in the train to Cuxhaven that she did not remark Edwina's silence. To-day closed the most precious, brightest chapter in her life's history. That which had so long been postponed to a vague future was now hard upon her, and she tried to prepare her mind to face the new order of things. If only Edwina had been an unattractive, plain girl! But Eunice quickly renounced that aspiration, for in such a case the child would not have resembled her father. It filled her with a sort of wonder at herself to mark with what lightning quickness the thought arose; and her face grew sad as she pondered on the nature of woman, and how futile it was for her to hope to stem the tide in the next generation. When more than an hour had passed and she still kept silence, Edwina leaned toward her.

"I had no idea it was such a long ride, had you?"

"No, I supposed we might be on the train half an hour."

"I hope you are not borrowing trouble about the voyage," continued the girl. "This trip has made you so strong that you can laugh at the waves. Remember the Channel."

Eunice regarded her with pensive affection. "Is n't it wonderful that the time has really come to go home? It has seemed far off for so long. I feel very sentimental, somehow, Ned."

"Yes, have n't we had a perfect time?" responded the girl, leaning her head against the cushions close to her cousin. "Shan't we live on it for years? Sentimental — why, I'm a mush of sentiment, cousin Eunice! Unburden your heart as much as you like."

Miss Pritchard's breath caught in a deep unconscious sigh. It was so impossible to accept this invitation.

Long, long stretches of green meadows, and at last the travelers began to see the tops of masts apparently growing from the salt marshes. The train was long and loaded, and when Cuxhaven was reached it was a weary time before all the tickets, first-class and second-class, and steerage, could be examined and the passengers pass on to the tender. All eyes were fixed on the handsome Patricia waiting at anchor. Eunice and Edwina's feet abandoned the foreign soil reluctantly, and as the tender steamed away, the band on the great steamer began to play the Austrian Hymn. Full and clear it rang across the water, chiming too touchingly with their sensitive mood, and they looked at each other through dim eyes. The tender approached the ship. The hymn finished, and immediately the band began to play "The Star Spangled Banner."

"Oh Ned!" wailed Miss Pritchard. "I did n't know I had so much wickedness in me! That does n't sound half so well as the other."

"You see, it 's time I took you home," returned the girl.

During the first twenty-four hours of the voyage they passed through rough water, and Edwina devoted herself to her cousin, who by dint of taking her meals on deck, maintained her equilibrium. When they anchored at Boulogne, Miss Pritchard moved to the boat's side with a crowd of her neighbors to see the tender come out. The band played the Austrian Hymn again, and she looked at the shores of France with wistful eyes. Two gray old windmills were turning on a green hill. Soon the strains of the Marseillaise made martial melody. The tender was approaching, and in a few minutes Miss Pritchard began to see strange faces appearing about her as the new arrivals rushed hither and thither, all at one time demanding chairs of the distracted deck steward.

Only now did Eunice observe that Edwina was not by her side. She had been there but a few moments ago; but suddenly a familiar face and form approached, hands outstretched. "Mr. Champion!" exclaimed Miss Pritchard. "We had n't an idea you were coming."

"Of course not," he returned, half laughing. "I knew there was many a slip betwixt cup and lip, and thought I would surprise you if I could."

"And you could," said Edwina, who now made her appearance. "Cousin Eunice, what an uncandid correspondent you have." She was a little pale in the brisk breeze as she greeted him, but her manner was composed.

"I knew Miss Pritchard could n't very well get home without me. I did n't want her to try, anyway."

"Oh, I 'm a proud lady since we crossed the Channel," said Eunice. "I have n't an idea of giving out on this voyage."

"Good enough! We 'll go to walk every day and you shall see another side of ocean travel. *Au revoir*; I suppose I had better look up my room."

When his tall and joyous person had vanished, Eunice looked at Edwina, who felt the color flooding back into her face.

"Well, is n't that surprising?" asked Miss Pritchard. "How did he manage it at such a full season?"

"I think a certain small person must have told tales long, long ago; but I 'm not going to scold you, cousin Eunice."

"I 'd better go to my chair, now, though, Ned. Discretion is the better part of valor. I do hope I shan't have to make an exhibition of myself this time."

It proved as the days went by that Miss Pritchard was not obliged to remain below, and Edwina for the most part stayed devotedly beside her. Howard Champion had placed his chair on Eunice's other hand, a proceeding which she permitted doubtfully.

"You must n't expect to find me myself," she announced. "I 'm just getting along. I 'm not having a good time, and I don't feel like talking."

He smiled. "Just say the word and I 'll take my chair to the other end of the ship."

"No," returned Eunice, faintly smiling also. "I can stand it if you can."

As much as anything could compel her approval on an ocean steamer, his behavior did so. Her wishes were anticipated without ostentation, his visits were not too frequent nor his stays too long, and his cheerfulness did not abate under the calm civility of Edwina's manner.

He occasionally took the latter away from her cousin and her book, to walk or to play shuffleboard. The first time, they went to a remote corner of the deck and paused beside the rail. "You 're not vexed that I did this, Edwina?"

The girl's carefully passive face suddenly glowed. "Vexed that this ship is not carrying me away from you — that the ocean is not going to divide us?"

He looked into her speaking eyes and at the wind-ruffled hair under her Tam O'Shanter, and came a step nearer.

She retreated. "Do remember it is the middle of the day!" she said quickly.

"We will walk this evening?" he asked. "I have eight letters from you to answer."

Edwina made a gesture. "I would not have believed I could do it. To keep writing without a reply" —

"I did reply. I wrote at least three to your one."

"And destroyed them!" with tragical reproach.

"Not I." He took from an inside pocket a package which she received and held in both hands.

They leaned against the rail facing one another, and the chatting couples that sauntered past all gave them looks of which the girl was conscious; but Champion was too deeply absorbed in studying each feature and trick of movement which had been mentally with him for five long months.

"Now what is the plan, Edwina?" he asked in a low, conversational tone. "I have obeyed you to the letter, but the time is up. I want to kiss that lock of hair blowing against your temple."

She tucked the lock back, where it stayed for two seconds.

"Perhaps you have n't any plan," he went on. "Then I have. It is to talk to Miss Pritchard this afternoon."

"Oh, you would n't, surely — not while she feels — feels so upset!"

"Well, you and I will come to a decision this evening. There is too much sunshine at present for me to induce you to look at things as I do. You may see better in the dark."

"Howard, we must n't. I must n't. I can't come out here to-night in a clandestine way, and have cousin Eunice wondering where I am, and asking me questions when I go back. We must wait."

He nodded thoughtfully. "I suspected you might say so. How long do you suppose I am to submit to look at you over a wall, gagged, and with my hands tied?"

"Listen," said the girl earnestly. "I have promised her I would never marry any one till she asked me to."

"When did you do that?"

"Just before — before we went to — the Catacombs."

"Why did you do it?"

"Because — because — I wanted to."

Champion smiled. "You should have consulted me."

"I was only guessing about you then, you see."

"If you had a moment's doubt, that was only due me. You kept me guessing the best part of a year."

"So when cousin Eunice has this feeling against everything, you see what an unwise time it is to ask her to be pleased with the one thing in all the world she dislikes most."

"Which is" —

"Why, the thought of my — of losing me. Howard," looking up at him appealingly, "I know it is a great deal to ask" —

"I know it is, too; and that ring of hair is blowing against your temple again, and the sun won't even go under a cloud."

"But you are n't going to spoil everything, I hope!"

"It could n't be spoiled. I have to stalk about with you like a mere acquaintance, and have to receive from you the sort of civility you might give to one of the steerage passengers."

Edwina bit her lip. "Mark my words, you will make a great mistake. Don't you notice that cousin Eunice does n't even treat you as usual? She feels that awful general repugnance."

"So do I. See here, Edwina, my beautiful darling" —

"For pity's sake!" exclaimed the girl, her cheeks glowing, as a portly woman passed, and slowly regarded them. "Do speak lower!"

"Oh, I 'm on confidential terms with that woman, anyway. You need n't mind her. She was telling me this morning about her travels. She said she had such a stupid cabman one whole day in Rome that she nearly pulled his coat-tails off; and she never could say 'Mercy' to him, for he never did anything right."

"There is n't anything or anybody stupid in Rome," sighed Edwina. "I love every little square of lava in the streets."

The blood slowly mounted in Champion's face as he looked down on her intently. "And yet you won't meet me out here this evening and tell me why?"

"Howard!" reproachfully. "*I* am far-sighted."

"I doubt it. I think those eyes, the prettiest that were ever set in a woman's head, have astigmatism. You see me with one, but the other can't get past Miss Pritchard. Now, you 've had a good, long try at this affair, Edwina. You let me handle it a while."

The girl drew a deep breath. "Of course, I can't control you, if you won't be controlled, but one thing, unless you are a madman, you will wait for, and that is a smooth day — much smoother than this. Now I must go back."

"And would rather go without me?"

"A hundred times."

"Then shake hands."

"Nonsense! I can't; I 'm holding the letters."

"Going to read them to Miss Pritchard?"

"Oh!" ejaculated Edwina. "Supposing I should drop one! Here, take them. Keep them a while. I have n't so much as a pocket."

She put them in his hand, and he made a feint of tossing them overboard.

"Howard!" The cry was so loud that everybody in that vicinity turned.

"You are making us very conspicuous, my love," he remarked.

"Oh, give them to me this instant! How could I have let them go! I will take them."

Champion gave her hand a pressure as he put the package into it, and she hurried away without another word.

CHAPTER XXI

THE OPAL DAY

Champion did wait for the quiet day, and it came. All the passengers on that trip will recall the morning when it was difficult to remember that one was on a ship, when the air scarcely stirred, and the wide, unrippled sea lay like a vast opal under the dreaming sky. The boat's motion was undiscernible, and Miss Pritchard suddenly felt her every faculty restored. Edwina as suddenly became unstrung. She knew that to-day would be a fateful one for her, and when she received a look from her lover as he drew his chair close to Miss Pritchard's, she said that she must go below and take advantage of this quiet season to alter certain arrangements in the stateroom.

Scarcely had she disappeared when Champion opened his subiect. He was sitting forward in his chair, leaning toward Eunice, who regarded him with a leniency not of late observable in her contemplation of her kind. "I am glad Miss Wilder has gone," he said, "for I have been wishing for opportunity for a confidential talk with you."

"Something more about that sweetheart you are going home to?" asked his companion kindly.

"Since you told me that you have no mother, I am the more glad to do anything I can for you."

"You told me in Rome, perhaps you remember, that I was welcome to ask a favor of you sometime."

"I certainly did."

"But I am going to surprise you. I love your child, Edwina."

Eunice leaned back heavily in her reclining chair, and her hand clasped the arm. "But your — your sweetheart that you told us of — whose health we drank in the supper room?"

"I have no other sweetheart. I loved her from the first. I loved her on the ship. I want your good wishes, and sanction, and influence."

"But Mr. Champion," Eunice swallowed with difficulty. "I should think you could see, you must often have seen, that you were not — not a favorite with Edwina."

"I fought that conviction for some time, but your word, your opinion, your wish would be everything to her."

His frank eyes were studying Eunice's excited, flushing face earnestly. "I want to be as good a son to you as I am husband to Edwina. I want to do a hundred things for you that I never had a chance to do for my mother. I have done something; forgive me for mentioning it, but all 's fair now. You have seemed to like me."

"Yes, Mr. Champion," returned Miss Pritchard gravely, "I do like you; but I must have time for this. You are asking of me my all, my all. Before we say anything further I must talk with Edwina."

"In my favor?" The young man took his companion's hand to assist her, for she was rising from her chair, and he retained it a little. "You think me over-sanguine, perhaps, but it is only because I am counting on your help. This is a matter of life and death to me, Miss Pritchard."

Eunice raised her gentle eyes to his with a look that made him feel for the moment convicted of aggressive selfishness. "It is the same to me, Mr. Champion."

Walking away, the little woman took a few turns up and down the end of the deck, her eyes on the opal tints of the water, her cheeks flushed. Then she sought the stairway and descended to the stateroom, where Edwina was putting a closet in order. The girl looked up with a start at her entrance.

"Are you about through here, Ned?" she asked. "It is a pity to spend any of this day indoors. Beside, I wish to talk with you. Can we find a quiet place?"

"I think so," replied Edwina, nonplused at her cousin's collected manner, and endeavoring to imitate it. Had Howard not carried out his purpose?

They left the cabin, passed the groups of players at shuffle-board on the lower deck, and found a secluded corner of which they took possession.

"I have been thinking about you a great deal to-day, Ned. I have a great deal to say to you."

Miss Pritchard looked off for a brief space, and Edwina observed the trembling of her lips. In a minute she went on: "I wish I could secure my own self-control for the next half hour. I don't want to be interrupted or bothered by tears or any nonsense of that kind."

Edwina regarded her, more and more astonished. For wailing and bemoaning she had been prepared, but not for this.

"In a few days we shall reach home, Ned, and I don't wish to stand in the way of its being a perfectly happy home-coming to you. Mr. Champion has been telling me that he cares for you."

The girl, sitting at her cousin's feet, stole her hand into Eunice's and kept her questioning eyes upon her.

"You have shown me innumerable times that he was not agreeable to you. You have shown me as often that Mr. Glenn was so. On Easter in the Borghese Gardens you impressed me as dejected because I was opposed to Mr. Glenn. You have volunteered to marry no one unless I ask you to do so. I want you to touch the dock in New York a happier girl than the one who left it. You have shown great eagerness to go home. Very well; I know sufficient about Mr. Glenn to make me willing to ask you to marry him, if you wish it."

A spasm of surprise passed over the young face. "Oh no, cousin Eunice! *No!*"

"You speak with a great deal of repugnance. What does it mean?"

"What do *you* mean, cousin Eunice?" was the uneasy response. "You don't talk like yourself. You don't act like yourself. Did — did Mr. Champion offend you?" she added timidly.

Something in her guardian's attitude and expression as she sat above her looking down with strange resolve in her eyes, perplexed and troubled Edwina's soul.

Eunice's look, returning the gaze of the loved face, softened. "My little Ned," she said in a changed tone, "I am going to surprise you very much. That's right, hold my hand, and let us never for a moment think apart." Eunice made a scarcely perceptible pause, then went on slowly. "I have known, dear, ever since that night in the Colosseum."

Edwina started back, gazed, then bowed her head on the other's knee.

"I turned at the moment you were in Mr. Champion's arms. I saw him kiss you," she continued, stroking the uncovered head. "I myself was the martyr, the cruelly used martyr for whom in my distraction I was crying. I said anything, anything that came into my head. If you were secretive, then I must be so too, until I had had time to think. You were not a girl with whom a man could take an idle liberty. Moreover, you were evidently not offended. Then you had been deceiving me. I had told you I could not bear a surprise, but you had not confided in me."

Impulsively Edwina raised her head to speak.

"Wait, Ned. Hear me first; then I will hear you."

The girl again bowed her face under the loving hand.

"Through the wretched hours of that eternal night I fought a terrible fight. Was ever martyr more cruelly torn by beasts than I by the merciless claws of suspicion and grief? Light was thrown upon a dozen situations where I had been a butt and laughing-stock for you and your lover — you, whose frankness and loyalty I would have staked my life upon. Wait, Ned, wait."

Miss Pritchard's soothing hand began again to smooth the girl's hair.

"All Mr. Champion's kindness and favors grew suddenly hateful. They had all been calculated, and meant only grasping for my little girl and winning her into deceit. I could not stay in bed. I walked up and down in agony of mind, until torture reached a point where numbness set in. Then other thoughts began whispering themselves to me. Your whole life rose up, a record of truth and devotion, and plead for you. Must you be condemned so quickly? Perhaps there was some explanation of your silence beyond a mere desire not to call down my disapproval of your love-affair. I determined to wait, — to see what you would do; to watch your plan if you had one. Meanwhile I tried not to feel such hatred of Mr. Champion as at first welled up in my heart. How could he help loving you? I determined to try to be fair to him, and if your action was being prompted by love for me, it might be proved. By the time dawn brought its natural help for nightmares, I had made up my mind to control myself and keep silence. It was clear that I could not talk with you while the wound was so fresh, without misery to us both, for enmity toward Mr. Champion kept springing up in me. 'Love your enemies,' I said to myself many times an hour in those days after Easter when we rushed about so from place to place. I said it while the angel-voices were singing in the Pantheon, I said it to the Arch of Constantine at the Forum, and at the house of Livia on the Palatine. When we went out to Tivoli and saw that immense waterfall sending clouds of smoke over the valley, I looked into the lovely rainbow that spanned it, and thought only of Mr. Champion. 'He could n't help it,' I said to myself again. 'Love your enemies.' I repeated it to the giant cypress in the gardens of the Villa d'Este, and again at Hadrian's Villa. All those spots seem to me now like places seen in a dream. By Thursday morning, when Mr. Champion came to ask us to go over the Vatican, I had myself in hand. The more I looked at you in this new light, the less the wound ached that you had given me. Whatever was influencing you, I began to be certain that it could mean no lack of love for me; and there was something new in your tenderness."

"Oh cousin Eunice! How good, how generous!" murmured Edwina.

"Then we went away; and you thought I did n't see that you were grateful to Mr. Champion for not betraying the situation. Ah Ned, it wrenched my heart that you felt the parting so; but, my little girl, not a jot of your sweetness and patience and unselfishness in the months that came afterward has been lost on me. I saw you had even cut yourself off from receiving letters from your lover; though perhaps you wrote to him. Often I was tempted to talk to you; but always my own shrinking from it was too strong. You were n't unhappy, and that new strength and womanliness in your face were growing out of your love. You had some plan. I did n't doubt you had set some limit in your mind. Perhaps you knew that Mr. Champion was going home with us" —

"I did n't. I did n't know it."

"At any rate," went on Miss Pritchard with a sad smile, "I suspected that you wished my wedding trip to be finished before there was any talk of yours. Now, Ned darling, I 've taken a long time for my fight, a long time to do my thinking. I did n't know before how selfish I was in my clinging to you; but your unselfishness has taught me a lesson." The speaker's eyes, looking wistfully across to the opal sea, caught sight of Champion, who had discovered them and was lingering near watching the sunshine on Edwina's hair and wondering what her attitude betokened.

Eunice caught his eye. How many pleasant associations she had with the tall, straight-limbed figure, the broad shoulders, and the frank, strong countenance. That smile which she had often praised now disclosed his gleaming teeth as he met her gaze. How, once, Ned Wilder's smile had warmed her heart! Had she forgotten those cravings of hers, that she should begrudge their satisfaction to his daughter? A motion of her hand sufficed to make Champion advance with alacrity. Edwina lifted her eyes, wet with unshed tears.

"She saw us, Howard," she said to him brokenly. "She saw us in the Colosseum. She has known all the time. I 've done everything she told me not to. I 've surprised her, and deceived her, and yet she forgives me and never says a reproachful word. All these months! Was ever any one so good, so generous!"

Miss Pritchard's improvised seat was not a very wide one, but Champion immediately made it broad enough for two, putting his arm around Eunice to hold her beside him. She colored, but did not look offended.

"I wished to tell you from the start," he said, "but Edwina was sure she knew best. I wanted to talk it right out with you, and ask your permission in good form."

"But you see, Ned knew I might refuse it in every sort of form, good and bad, if you were too sudden."

"How lovely you are to understand, cousin

Eunice!" Edwina still kept her head in her cousin's lap, as if she dreaded to take a loftier position.

"Have you asked her yet to marry me?" said Champion.

"No. Will you marry him, Ned?" asked Miss Pritchard gently.

"Not unless you 'd like it better than anything," came the muffled reply.

"She would," said Champion, giving the slight little figure in his arm a closer pressure. "She can't get along without me."

"We can't get along without her," the voice still more muffled. "Tell her so, Howard."

"Most certainly," he responded. "What sort of a household could we expect to run without cousin Eunice's better judgment to fall back upon?"

"No, children. I have n't thought so much about this without considering that question. Miranda and I may live near, but it would be against my better" —

"Then I won't, I can't, I never will" — burst forth Edwina. "You don't really want me to marry."

"My dear Ned, why then do you suppose I bought all that linen in Berlin?"

At this Edwina's head flew up, much ruffled as to hair and flushed and tear-stained as to face, but in Mr. Champion's critical and impartial judgment, prettier than ever.

She stared at her cousin and her lover long enough to grow pink to the tips of her ears, and then dove back into Miss Pritchard's tailor-made lap.

"You see, I can be double-faced too when I try," said Eunice triumphantly. "Mr. Champion, you" —

"Miss Pritchard," interrupted the young man gravely, "if you don't know it, I will inform you that it is highly improper to let a fellow embrace you as I am doing now, unless you know him well enough to call him by his first name."

"Oh, are you embracing her, Howard?" asked Edwina plaintively, eagerly lifting her face, open-lipped, to gaze at this phenomenon, and so encouraged by it that thereafter she sat up, the two she loved best looking down at her. "Cousin Eunice, you always did like Howard from the first, did n't you?" appealingly. "And you know he is n't a monster, don't you?"

"You 'd better live with us the first year, anyway, to watch me," said Champion. "You want to be certain that I don't drag Edwina around by the hair."

Miss Pritchard smiled. "We 'll leave it that if you do, I will live with you the second year." She took one of Edwina's hands and placed it in Champion's, then kept the other herself.

The ship slipped quietly through the opal water. Tints of rose and pale blue shone in the sky above and the sea below. The three looked at each other in hushed content. Eunice, as she met her child's eyes, thought of her youth, of the man whose memory she still loved, and it came to her that this joy of Edwina's was something he would have been glad of, perhaps was glad of now.

"Children," she said, with soft earnestness, "I want you to know that I am happy in this for myself as well as for you. I was more selfish than I knew with my one chick. I hope we shall all three grow broader and better, and do an ever-increasing good in the world." She lifted her delicate face to Champion and kissed him, a salute which he met and returned with fervor; then she leaned to Edwina, whose eyes were radiant, and pressed loving lips to hers.

"Thank God for this ending to my wedding trip!" she said.

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